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FAITH AND WORKS.

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BY THE

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Διατί τὴν λαλίαν τὴν ἐμὴν οὐ γινώσκετε; ὅτι οὐ δύνασθε ἀκούειν τὸν
λόγον τὸν ἐμόν.—*Evang. Johan. viii. 43.*



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J. E. Taylor

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FAITH AND WORKS.



THE question whether faith is an extraordinary and supernatural gift has no prominent settlement in Scripture. It is either taken for granted or passed over as not necessary to be entertained. The place which faith occupies in the teaching of Jesus may, therefore, be profitably discussed without deciding beforehand that its origin is divine,—more especially since such a decision, if arrived at, would have a possible tendency to diminish the sense of human responsibility, under the expected or imagined influence of an overpowering inspiration. The silence of Scripture may be safely imitated. In our bodily frames there are some organs which work independently

of our will or consciousness, and others which we put in motion voluntarily and with conscious design. Now, in preserving physical life our part is not to rest satisfied because the processes of respiration, digestion, and assimilation are going on without our care, but to supply proper food, air, and exercise, by the use of the organs which are placed under our control. And the measures which we take to effect these purposes are taken, not because we disregard the inner unconscious functions, but because we assume them, and trust to their continuance. Just in the same way, there are involuntary and unconscious, and voluntary and conscious functions in the mind. The former are beyond our knowledge and control ; the latter are placed under our superintendence and management. The laws by which the mind grows, by which it takes in and assimilates external impressions, we have nothing to do with. But we have everything to do with the character of the impressions which we furnish to it, and the habits which we fix upon it. And the pains which we take to present pure images to the mind and to avoid im-

pure ones, to contract good habits of thought and to shun bad ones, are taken, not because we ignore the inward process which a power not our own is conducting, but because we admit and believe in it. According to these analogies, it may be very beneficial to discuss the external and intelligible side of faith.

The opinion, rather implied than distinctly avowed by some persons, that faith is wholly mysterious in its origin and nature, so that it is quite independent of reason or external influences, and cannot be explained or accounted for in a way that would be intelligible to an unbeliever, seems to proceed from a confusion between faith and its objects, belief and the things believed, and to base itself on the phenomena of matured belief rather than on those of its first stages, which are naturally an easier subject of investigation. The act of the mind when it assents to certain Christian doctrines, as, for instance, to the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Atonement, may be contemplated and comprehended while the doctrines themselves lie beyond the range of obser-

vation or comprehension; although, when the mind gets into a state of fusion with its tenet, when the doctrine interpenetrates and colours and characterizes the mind, it is only natural that the incomprehensibleness of the doctrine should conceal the reasonableness of its original adoption. The belief that Jesus was the Son of God is proved by His life, miracles, and doctrines. These avowedly appeal to our reason and affections. The consent of the understanding to the mysteries which He teaches is a voluntary deference to authority which has demonstrated itself to be more than human. Both are rational acts, since a reason can be assigned for either. But, however these matters may be regarded, the essential point, which it concerns us most to know, must always stand, so long as we read the Scriptures and employ our understandings, or even our eyes, in the full noonday of clearest observation.

The really important question in connection with the subject is this,—Whether there is any faculty, or condition, or frame of the mind, natural or inspired, or partly one and partly the other (let

it be called faith, or trust, or confidence, or resignation to God's will, or acquiescence in the plan of salvation), which, of itself, without external actions, renders men accepted by God ; or whether, in order to reach this acceptance, in addition to the inward faculty or frame, external works are also required. This is the practical issue, in which all differences of opinion about faith culminate at last. Now, this question, stated as it has been, is capable of two very different meanings. It may be understood as expressing uncertainty whether there is any attitude or relation of man towards his God which, without its having any tendency to affect or without actually affecting the conduct, gains the divine favour ; or it may be understood as raising the issue whether there is any attitude or relation which, considered apart from its natural and actual results in the conduct, without taking their worth or their existence into the account, secures our salvation. Faith without works may signify faith that has no tendency to produce works, and never does produce them ; or it may mean faith that has a tendency to produce works, and that

object is to bring them into agreement. It is evident that if the doctrine that we are saved by a faith which has no tendency to produce works, and does not produce them (if there be such a doctrine), were substituted for the former of those two, it could not possibly be reconciled with the latter, and consequently cannot be reconciled with portions of Scripture.

Now, in the first place, it is both Scriptural and reasonable to say in an absolute sense that a man is saved by faith. Even though no passage can be found in the Bible which states that we are justified by faith without works, as opposed to faith accompanied by its proper works, yet, as faith is often put forward absolutely, in distinction from some other principle, and we are said to be saved by faith and not by that other principle, it must be inferred that the essential character of faith, apart from any manifestation of it, is the saving or justifying medium. Besides, it is reasonable to say that we are saved by faith, considered singly. Works cannot be of any moment in God's sight. If I profess friendship

for a man like myself, it is only right that I should prove it by my actions, for he has no other means of judging of the reality of my friendship. Or he may stand in need of my good offices, and if I withhold them I have no claim to be called his friend. But God does not stand in need of our works, and He knows our hearts. Therefore, if we have faith, it is all that He requires : He sees it exist, and needs no proof of it.

And yet it should not be said, in a universal and unqualified sense, that God does not need our good offices. Absolutely, and with regard to the possibilities of His omnipotence, He does not need them ; but relatively and instrumentally He does. He could work without means, but He chooses to work by means, and, so choosing, He requires the pliability and willing co-operation of the instruments He adopts. His Kingship is to be made known ; His children are to be fed and instructed ; all His creatures are to be assisted in their distress ; temptations must be overcome ; the poisonous weeds of falsehood and sin must be plucked forth. For all this God wants our

aid. It is by deeds of charity and kindness, by the practice of Christian virtue, by discountenancing evil in others and suppressing it in ourselves, that God's providence is carried on upon earth. That starving family want meat and drink to save them from destruction. That homeless stranger is dying for the soft accents of brotherhood. In this way God Himself, in the persons of the sick, the poor, the prisoner, is in need of assistance. Good works are not the idle parade of loyalty, they are not the superfluous evidence of faith; they are the light of a dark world, which Christians are required to hold forth; they are the taxes by which the government of Christ's kingdom is supported.

It is, however, true that God does not need the evidence or the aid of our works in connection with our finding favour in His sight. Faith is all that He requires. But He requires a large and unreserved faith. He will not be satisfied with an indolent careless assent or a selfish dependence. It is evident throughout the New Testament history that the quality or disposi-

tion which attracts the attention of Jesus varies in degree, is insufficient in its lower stages, and succeeds in gaining its end only when it reaches a certain measure of intensity. The formal possession of faith is not enough. The Apostles are frequently rebuked as men of "little faith" (Matt. viii. 26). Littleness of faith is in proportion to the admixture of doubt or double-mindedness (Matt. xiv. 31). Faith may be so adulterated that it becomes inoperative (Matt. xvii. 20, vii. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xiii. 2). It may die out (Luke viii. 13). Greater indications of faith (or indications of a greater faith) succeed, while lesser indications are unsuccessful. Jesus grants to a greater faith what He would refuse to a lesser (Matt. xv. 28). A higher display of faith is met by a higher type of miracle (Matt. viii. 7, 10, 13). The faith, therefore, that justifies or saves must be perfect faith. An idle opinion, or a certainty that is accompanied by practical indifference, or that is encroached on or overgrown by the lusts and cares of life, will not suffice. It must be a conviction of the whole

orce and importance of the truth, in all its consequences and duties, as well as of the truth itself. It must, in fact, be such a faith as would act if it had the opportunity. Setting aside the consideration whether a man is exposed to temptation or not, the faith, in the abstract, which can save him must be such that it would protect him from it if he were. He may be poor, but it must be of such a kind as would show him to be liberal if he were rich. He may be rich, but his faith must be so strong that he shall have the spirit that befits poverty. He may be alone and obscure, but it must be such that if he were illustrious and in the midst of crowds it would keep him in the path of duty. If it be such, God sees it and is satisfied. Regarded by itself, alone, abstractly, such faith justifies. Whether a man possessed of faith of this kind could possibly pass through life without any opportunity of manifesting it, is a point that is not at all necessary to be decided. Faith in its own nature is a sufficient medium of justification; only it must be full-grown and perfect faith.

There are two forms of expression used in reference to faith which, by suggesting an imaginary difference, tend to cause, or to perpetuate and extend, grave and fundamental misconceptions on the subject. We speak sometimes of faith strong enough to produce works, and sometimes of faith of such a kind as to produce works. The two expressions mean the same identical thing. Faith differs in quantity, not in quality,—in degree, not in kind. The expression, “faith of such a kind,” naturally suggests the idea that there are different kinds of faith, or more probably got into use from the preconceived notion that there are. The common division of faith into different kinds is in reality a division of the different kinds of persons who believe, or of the things which are believed. St. James does not distinguish the faith of devils from the faith of good men, save in degree. The whole force and application of his argument would be lost if they were not the same in kind. You believe in a God, he argues, you only go so far as devils go in this. If you would differ from them, you must go farther.

What is called historical faith is ordinary faith, described by its particular object at the time. Faith to work miracles, or to be worked on miraculously, is ordinary faith described by its then particular work or result. Difference of circumstances in those who believe, or difference of objects or operations on which the belief is exercised, does not imply, and cannot occasion, any difference in the original faculty of belief or faith. The only difference with regard to the faith itself in all these, and all other such cases, is difference of strength, singleness, or degree. Scripture uniformly assumes that there is only one kind of faith (Heb. xi.). The one talent was of the same kind as the ten. The oil in the lamps of the foolish virgins was the same as that in the lamps of the wise: it differed only in quantity. The flame emitted by both was the same: it differed only in duration. The soil on which the corn was sown was the same in all parts of the field: it differed only in that there was more or less of it for the corn to take root in. The plants that came up were the same in kind:

they differed only in that some of them had all the soil to themselves, and all the rain and sunshine, while others shared them with stones and weeds. So faith in a good man, in a good and honest heart, is the same in kind with faith in a bad man, if he has any. In the case of the good man it possesses all, or a large portion of his heart and mind. In the case of the bad man it occupies only a small portion of his heart and mind, the remaining and far larger portion being given to the objects of sense, and to thoughts and cares of the world. If at one time I behold poverty and am moved to compassion, and relieve it, and if at another time I see poverty and am moved to compassion, but am prevented from relieving it by indolence or avarice, the compassion is essentially the same in both cases. It differs in that it is strong in one case and weak in the other. The priest and the Levite felt pity for the wounded traveller, as well as the Samaritan. It was the uneasiness of an emotion to which they did not intend to yield that drove them to the other side of the way. It was the same emotion,

yielded to by the Samaritan, that brought him to the side of the wounded man. St. James obviously implies that the only difference in faith is that sometimes it is attended by works and sometimes it is not—that is, that sometimes it is strong and effective, and sometimes weak and ineffective, or that sometimes it reigns alone and with authority in the heart, and sometimes it is driven from its throne by low and sordid interests. The objection will probably be made that St. James, in his Epistle, does not treat of saving or genuine faith, but of dead faith. It is true that he does not treat of saving or genuine faith; but the want of genuineness and saving power lies in the absence of works, that is, in the want of strength and fulness in the faith to influence the actions. The epithet “dead” when applied in the New Testament to an abstract faculty or principle means simply “inoperative” (Rom. vii. 8, viii. 10; James ii. 17, 20, 26). The idea that St. James is dealing in his Epistle with a different kind of faith from saving or genuine faith is thoroughly unscriptural. He deals with the only

kind of faith ever mentioned or alluded to in Scripture, as is sufficiently apparent from the fact that he is writing to well-instructed Christians (i. 17, 18), and that all that he requires to render the faith of which he treats perfect is the addition of works. If it were false faith, works could not make it perfect. We are continually warned in Scripture to prove our faith by our works. Not a single passage can be found in which we are warned to prove our works by our faith, it being taken for granted that the faith which produces works is of the right kind. There is no command, or intimation, or hint that we must substitute one kind of faith for another.

There is one application of the faculty of faith that demands a special notice. By limiting the object of faith to the death of Christ, and its end to our personal pardon, a scheme of salvation is obtainable wholly disconnected with works of righteousness. If we are instantaneously and irreversibly pardoned and saved by throwing ourselves upon the death of Christ, it is quite evident that the after-life, whatever it may be,

can have no influence on the foregone conclusion. Now, in order to establish this doctrine of salvation wholly independent of works, actual or implied, the death of Christ must be regarded as a bare historical fact. If its moral character be taken in, moral consequences will be involved, and the future fruits of righteousness will be comprehended in the idea of the faith or trust that rests on the Atonement. Therefore, in order to establish such a doctrine, the moral and spiritual bearings of the death of Christ must be shorn down until it is reduced to the hard, lifeless proportions of its material emblem, the brazen serpent that was raised in the wilderness, and until the saving of the soul becomes as passive and mechanical a process as the miraculous healing of the body. It is only by preventing the principles of moral obedience from being included in the idea of this limited faith that it can be effectually hindered from ranking amongst its consequences. The result will then be that the entire practical portion of Scripture will be irreparably disjoined from the

doctrinal, the description of a final judgment according to works will become an isolated and wholly unaccountable phenomenon, and the one essential principle derived from Scripture will be opposed to the whole stream and current of Scripture and to the whole analogy of nature. But, in fact, the faith that is concerned with the Atonement and with personal salvation only is not a special kind of faith, but a mere limitation of the mind and conscience to a superficial and narrow view of a most pregnant subject. It is a repetition under the Christian scheme of the fatal and prevalent error of the Jews under the older dispensation, who alienated sacrifice from obedience (1 Sam. xv. 22; Hos. vi. 6; Amos v. 21-24; Micah vi. 8; Is. i. 14-17, lviii. 6, 7; Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7). The death of Christ is never presented to us by itself for our trust or reliance. We cannot fix our attention on it alone without mutilating the personality of Jesus, as well as the integrity of our own faculties. Faith in Christ means faith in the sum of all that He was, and did, and taught, and suffered. If

we believe or trust in less, we do not exercise the whole faculty nor comprehend the whole object. Such expressions as "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31) must be interpreted in the proper fulness of the three terms, "Believe," "Lord Jesus Christ," and "saved." "Believe" must be taken in at least that broad practical sense in which it could only have been understood by those to whom it was first addressed, according to their habits of thought and language. "Lord Jesus Christ" meant a history, an example, and a body of precepts, as well as a Person or an event. "Saved" could only mean, to Christian or Pagan, redeemed from the sordidness of sin into the nobleness of virtue. To believe in Jesus is not to depend upon a supreme magnificent God, arrayed in the splendours of eternity, for an easy deliverance from toil and trouble, nor upon a Sacrifice whereby the favour of that great Being can be attained as by a charm; but it is, in addition to all besides, to look up to, as our Guide and Friend, a poor, brave,

righteous, persecuted, world-hated Man, who offers us His own example and fortunes as the wisest and happiest lot that earth affords. We cannot divorce the moral element from the faith, the life, or the salvation. Even if we concentrate our faith on the death of Christ as ordained by God, we lose that half of the lesson which throws light upon the other half, if we forget that He was slain by men because He rebuked their evil ways. We do not, in fact, believe in a characterless Saviour. His character and commands are intensified on the Cross. Thence, with more emphatic voice than ever, He cries, "Take up your cross and follow me." Belief in Christ crucified is belief that the unknown and unimaginable Majesty of Heaven and the true majesty of earth were represented by One who died on a cross. Most truly does it require a renewed heart to receive this doctrine. St. Paul always speaks of the Crucifixion as something morally affecting his life. "God forbid," he says, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom

the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14). Faith in the death and atonement of Christ, apart from their moral character, is, therefore, not a distinct kind of faith, but an imperfect stage or degree of faith.

Let us enumerate the steps which we have made in our inquiry. Faith is the medium of salvation. Faith is not distinguished into different kinds, but by different degrees. The faith that saves must be perfect in degree. Faith perfect in degree is equivalent to what is variously called strong, great, or much faith. The next step will be to ascertain what is meant by strong faith. It follows from man's mental constitution, and is seen by daily observation, that the amount of force exerted upon the conscience or reason by truth is in proportion to the fulness in which it is willingly contemplated, and to the constancy with which it is kept present before the mind. Whatever the absolute importance of particular ideas may be, their relative importance, that is, their actual influence on our thoughts and conduct, is regulated pre-

cisely by the reception we give them. The most insignificant subject, if it impregnates our whole mental being, becomes all in all to us. Mind has the power of making the most essentially trifling fact or dogma momentous, or the most momentous one trifling. The most momentous fact, if we refuse to think about it, is nothing to us, our belief in it is weak and idle. The most trifling fact, if we continually dwell upon it, is everything to us. Whatever we think most about, quite irrespective of its intrinsic worth, seems most important to us. Some ideas are fleeting and transitory: they pass, cause no effect, leave no impression. Others are lasting, perpetually recurring and forming the character, or rather constituting and being the character by their continual presence. What we think most about we mentally and morally are, and what we mentally and morally are, we say and do in our outward lives. The earth yields figs or thistles just in proportion as it supports fig-trees or thistle-trees. The actions of men are good or bad just in proportion as they render

themselves good or bad by choosing and cherishing good or bad thoughts and principles. Men have favourite ruling ideas. It does not so much matter, as to the effect produced, what the ideas are, as how much we cherish and encourage them. Many a man is governed all his life by an idea which to all others appears unworthy of a moment's serious consideration. But, trifling and weak as it seems to others, it is powerful to him who entertains it, because all the strength of his nature is imparted to it.

Every truth and every falsehood has a certain inherent moral direction belonging to it which it communicates to the mind that is identified with it. This direction the mind, by its living power, transmutes into motion. There are some truths whose direction is more in agreement with the structural and constitutional tendencies of the mind than that of others. These as they fall in with and recreate the original disposition, will strengthen it, bring it forth into action, and increase their influence by repetition. There are also falsehoods whose tendency is in unison

with the implanted evil bias of the mind, and they also develope into acts and grow more powerful as they are repeated in practice. But there are again fragmentary views of truth, facts torn from their moral sources and connections, one-sided representations, which address themselves to the emotions and the imagination, and because of their disconnection with fundamental innate principles are weakened by repetition, or occupy the attention without ever influencing the conduct. The deep-rooted eternal practical principles of Christianity, of which all its facts are instances, of which its most awful central fact is the imprinting afresh its original nobleness on human nature by God's own hand, of which all its precepts are imperfect utterances—the principles of judgment, mercy, and faith—constitute the mind that receives and keeps them perpetually and prominently in its consciousness a mind of strong faith or of much faith. The mind that seldom contemplates them, or fills their place with distorted shadows of them, or with appeals to passion or to sense, or with idle for-

mal obedience to human commands, is a mind of weak faith or of little faith. Weak faith or little faith means true Christian doctrine little or seldom thought about; true Christian doctrine much or continually thought about is strong faith. This is the faith that is the actual medium of salvation.

If a faith abiding and potential be that which is indispensable to the salvation of man, we might expect that the necessity for it would be very strongly inculcated, and that the description of it would form a prominent and constantly-recurring topic in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. But how can faith be described? How can its different degrees be distinguished and separately held up to notice? Even if there were various kinds of faith, how would it be possible to discriminate them by any intrinsic and essential marks? We cannot explain motives or feelings in themselves. The faintest joy or sadness could not be made known in distinction from the most violent and strongest by any description of the mere feelings.

We can distinguish them and their degrees only by the effects which they produce. The breeze and the storm possess no internally distinctive qualities by which their difference can be explained. If we wished to describe them, we should say that the one rustled the leaves or fanned the cheek, while the other tore down the monarchs of the forest, and lined the shore with wrecks. There is no conceivable way of showing the difference, save by pointing to the different results. The wind blows, and we hear the sound thereof. If we did not hear the sound, we should not know of its existence. With the effects produced our knowledge begins and ends. So it is with all spiritual emotions and principles; we know of them only by their effects. I may feel an emotion of pity so weak and feeble that caprice or selfishness prevents its acting, and so hides its existence from the observer; or I may feel it in so strong a degree as to deny myself in order to relieve the object of it, and thus manifest it to the world. It would be impossible to distinguish one from the other

except by referring to the outward visible results. So the love of God and of Christ may be so feeble that it falls before the least temptation, or so strong that it animates every action. So faith may be so cowardly and so partial that each form of worldliness triumphs over it, or it may become so mighty in its fulness, and so plant itself on the eternal verities of heaven reproduced in the human soul, that it overcomes the world in its most seductive form. In all these cases the only mode of distinguishing is by the consequences, the visible tangible results. In this manner the Bible describes perfect, saving faith to us. In this way works are necessary, that it may be known that we have perfect faith. Faith is all that God demands from us, but it must be perfect faith, and we could not know what perfect faith meant unless it were described by its effects.

This manner of indicating true faith is only one phase of the general method of the new covenant. Law had failed in two directions: it had neither instilled the right principle, nor produced the

right conduct. The Gospel aims at instilling the right principle as its main object, and, as the only means—the only means intelligible to us and appealing to our reason, not denying but taking for granted the secret, inward, spiritual process which God conducts—of doing this efficiently, it describes and demands the right conduct. The reason of this is plain when we remember that the name of any mental quality or motive is a word conventionally representing certain actions, together with the habit of mind which produces them, and that the actions are the only intelligible part of the definition. If the virtues by which Jesus wished His people to be distinguished were taught to them by their current names only, His teaching would be liable to all the ambiguities of language which degeneracy of morals invariably either follows from or introduces. Words are subject to the same kind of abuse and depravation as law. Their meaning may be frittered away by subtlety, or lost in vague generalities, exploded in idle sentiment, or evaded by trivial performances. Such names of principles

as friendship, patriotism, magnanimity, and all terms, in fact, which aspire at expressing the inward glow that accompanies a lofty thought, whose sense, in consequence, is in danger of evaporating into sound, and whose utterance is to some extent a waste of the emotion, and may possibly be regarded as a compensation for the absence of the practice, are omitted in the teaching of Jesus and His disciples, and in their place we have only an account of the sober deeds that testify to the existence of the principles themselves in the hearts of the doers. The fate of the only rhetorical word which the translators of our English Bible needlessly imported in order to give greater distinction to a simple enumeration of the daily duties that love inspires might be sufficient to prove the wisdom of this rule (1 Cor. xiii.). Jesus has, therefore left the qualities that mark His followers, represented, not by an ambitious terminology, but by the abiding features of nature and by His own example. He describes the quality by the one unchanging and infallible test of its existence, its strength, and its purity,

—action. The character which He wished to impress on His disciples He illustrated by pointing out to them the practice or attitude of some class or object for their imitation. Trust in God for the necessaries of life He exemplified by the lilies of the field, and the fowls of the air. Docility and innocence He instanced by the demeanour of children. To show to what extent Christians of all ranks should minister to each other, He washed His disciples' feet. He expressly recorded the universal lesson that the goodness or badness of the heart can be known only by the goodness or badness of the outward life. But a good heart in the Christian idea is not merely a heart free from evil habits, nor one acquainted with the truths of religion, but a heart thoroughly impregnated with those truths to the exclusion of all beside. When, therefore, we are taught to know the tree by its fruits, the meaning is that we are to know perfect faith by its works, perfect faith being not pure doctrines only, but pure doctrines embraced with the whole heart and mind. John the Baptist described repentance by its fruits.

St. Paul proved the superiority of his ministry, that is, the greatness of his faith, by his labours and sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 23). The account given of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi.) first adverts in figurative language to the subjective certainty of the mind engrossed with the truths of revelation, and then describes this condition by its appropriate achievements. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, in various ways proved the faith that was in them by their obedience. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." Their rejection of this world proved the largeness of their yearning for the invisible, their works proved the fulness of their faith. St. Paul's description of love (1 Cor. xiii.) is a more delicate and searching application of the same test. The objective accomplishments of eloquence, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and zeal are contrasted with the

subjective condition of the mind wholly surrendered in all its thoughts, feelings, and affections to righteousness, and manifesting itself in those unsuspecting, uncensorious, unselfish dispositions which, so far as they prevail, sweeten the intercourse of life. Showy and official acts are not so certain a proof of perfect pervasive faith as those minute courtesies of religion which flow forth with the ease and constancy of nature, and tell that the whole fountain of the heart is softened and purified. The ever-repeated enforcement of good works, therefore, which we find in Scripture, must be understood as the Divine plan for enabling believers to know with certainty whether they are keeping the true objects of faith, as revealed by Jesus, before their minds constantly and with singleness of aim. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house on a rock" (Matt. vii. 24). "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 17). "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a

hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass : for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James i. 22-27). St. James, the principal object of whose Epistle is to distinguish weak, transient, mixed faith from faith strong, constant, and pure (i. 2-8), has no other mode of indicating the latter than by the works which it does, and he ascribes the deficiency of the former to superficial views of truth. The unworking believer is such because the objects of faith take but a slight hold on his mind. But he who pierces into the depths,

and imbibes the principle, of God's law, that principle in the light of which all earthly laws vanish, and which is therefore freedom, and who continues in it, will become a doer of the work. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. . . . If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. . . . What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or

sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me

* Alford translates *νεκρά καθ' ἑαυτήν* "dead in itself," a turn of thought which cannot possibly be made to fit in with the line of argument. The Apostle's position is, that faith without works is unprofitable. He takes as an illustration words of kindness and goodwill, indispensably good in themselves, so far as they go, and asks what would they profit to a needy person if unaccompanied by deeds of charity? So, he argues, faith, if it have not works, is dead or unprofitable; and then, guarding against the inference which might be drawn if the word were left unqualified, that such faith is absolutely dead, he adds "by itself," "in its singleness." The remark may also be ventured that neither by the inherent force of the words, nor by common usage, does the expression *καθ' ἑαυτό* mean "in itself." In a philosophical treatise it might, perhaps, be casually used to express such an idea. (Though compare Plato, *Theætet.* p. 251, Teub. Lips.) The following passages are the result of a few hours' reading in a single volume of a single author, and will show the popular meaning of the expression:—*Τὰ ἰμάτια δοκεῖ θερμαίνειν τὸν ἄνθρωπον, οὐκ αὐτὰ δὴ ποῦ θερμαίνοντα καὶ πρὸς-βάλλοντα τὴν θερμότητα καθ' ἑαυτὸ γὰρ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ψυχρὸν ἐστίν. . . . Τὸ δὲ ἡδέως ζῆν καὶ ἰλαρῶς οὐκ ἔξωθέν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν πράγμασιν ἡδονὴν καὶ χάριν ὡσπερ ἐκ πηγῆς τοῦ ἡθους, προστίθησιν. (Plut. de Virt. et Vit. 1.)*

thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body

Οὐκ ἀγνοῶ δὲ, ὅτι καὶ διὰ κόπους πυρέττουσιν ἄνθρωποι, καὶ δι' ἐγκαύσεις καὶ διὰ περιψύξεις. Ἄλλ' ὥσπερ αἱ τῶν ἀνθέων ὄσμαι καθ' ἑαυτὰς ἀσθενεῖς, εἰσμιχθεῖσαι δὲ τῷ ἐλαίῳ βώμην ἰσχυροῖσι καὶ τόνον· οὕτω ταῖς ἕξωθεν αἰτίαις καὶ ἀρχαῖς, οἷον οὐσίαν καὶ σῶμα παρέχει τὸ πλῆθος ὑποκείμενον. (Plut. de tuenda San. præcept. x.)
 Ἰδὼρ δὲ οὐ μόνον τὸ μιγνύμενον πρὸς οἶνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ τοῦ κεκραμένου μεταξὺ πινόμενον, ἀβλαβέστερον οἰεῖ τὸ κεκραμένον. (Plut. de tuenda San. præcept. xvii.)

without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James ii.). In this passage the Apostle warns his readers not to rest contented with a faith of the Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons,—with a partial, one-sided, imperfect faith,—with a faith that reaches to some one portion of their consciousness, and leaves the remainder untouched, or that contemplates only some fragmentary form of doctrine, and, in consequence, is not able to overcome the world and its cruel distinctions,—with a double-minded faith that attempts to combine the ways of God and the ways of the world; but to go on adding faith to faith, to let the whole truth of God penetrate their whole being, until all men, rich and poor, are equal in their sight as they are in the sight of God Himself. Anything short of this is imperfect faith. The recognition of equal human rights, under all social disparities, the practical acknowledgment of real Christian brotherhood, is the lowest mark to which faith must rise in order to save. No faith is so absolutely perfect as to merit the favour of God as a right, for the

essential basis of Christian faith is a sense of our inevitable shortcomings. But our trust or faith in God must be so strong, and full, and abiding as at least to produce such a likeness of Christ in us that, as He came down from heaven and became flesh, and was merciful to us when we were perishing, so we, each in our degree, shall be merciful to our brother-men, who are our own flesh and blood. The faith that rises to this point of obedience will be counted for righteousness. It is not strictly righteousness in itself, for no human faith can ever attain to actual perfectness of obedience. But, inasmuch as it is faith in a Saviour who did a perfect work on our behalf, it is treated for His sake as if it were absolute righteousness. No idle or narrow faith is ever counted for righteousness. It is strong, full, and acting faith that is so accepted by God. Thus we find that the statement concerning Abraham, that he "believed God, and that it was counted to him for righteousness," is used by St. Paul and St. James in exactly the same sense (Rom. iv. 3; James ii. 23). St. Paul quotes it to prove that faith, and not works (not

faith without its works), is the principle on which we are saved. He does not enter into the question of degrees of faith, which would be foreign to his purpose (which was, not to show that we are saved by a higher degree of faith and not by a lower, but that the principle by which we are accepted is faith, and not works), but he makes it evident from the instance which he takes that full and perfect faith was that which he had in his mind. St. James, who is treating about different degrees of faith, and whose express object is to prove that we are saved by perfect faith, and not by imperfect faith, makes the same quotation, and takes the same example to establish his point. St. Paul argues that even in the case of the obedient, devoted Abraham, it was his faith that was counted for righteousness. St. James argues that it was only the faith of one whose faith wrought with his works, and was made perfect by works, that was counted for righteousness. The two Apostles, when referring to the faith that justifies, or that is counted for righteousness, mean engrossing and active faith; and they perfectly coincide in doctrine.

Good works are a proof of the sincerity of our faith to ourselves as well as to others. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. . . . Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before God" (1 John iii. 14-19). Thus it is in reality the fulness and purity of faith that will be tried at the day of judgment. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them,

I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity ” (Matt. vii. 21-23). An incomplete faith, capable only of official acts of power and display, although it may blind and deceive its possessor, is insufficient to meet the final scrutiny. The faith that will approve itself before the universe is that which, comprehending the fulness of the love of Christ, and entering into the depths of man’s moral nature, engages all his faculties in behalf of that supreme equity which is the nature of God, in the image of which man was created, and which, in our present state, finds its instinctive exercise on the side of the poor, the wronged, the slave, the suffering, the friendless, the lost. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me ” .(Matt. xxv. 34-36.)

True or saving faith may be taken as a name descriptive of a mind that pursues its highest instinct as fulfilled and exemplified in the life, death, and precepts of Jesus, that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that meditates upon these things, that gives itself wholly to them, that continues in them. It is the character of the man who loves the Lord his God, in His revealed righteousness, with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. It is the disposition of one whose thoughts are habitually set, not on the future joys of heaven, but on the present instincts of heaven, truth and right. For these are the unseen things that are eternal. Sudden impulses and momentary aspirations after truth and goodness are, no doubt, of the nature of faith. But it is the constancy, the abiding fulness of faith that renders it perfect and saving. Fixing our hope and trust on the Sacrifice of Christ is to dwell in the fullest light of Divine love, but unless we penetrate to that principle in God's nature from which the Atonement emanated, unless we find in our own consciences the quality

corresponding to that principle of mercy, and train it into living, active, not merely receptive, but forthgiving harmony with its Divine prototype, the light and the warmth in which we dwell have wrought no regeneration in us. To be one with God, or to be reconciled to Him, is to have His nature in activity. It is not enough to wish to be saved ourselves; there must be the Godlike purpose, conceived and executed in the Spirit of God, to save others. And to save others is not to tell them of salvation in Christ, but it is to do the things that Christ did, moved by the same principles that moved Christ. We are to honour all men, not because Christ became a man and died for men, as if the honourableness of humanity only then and thereby began; but we are to honour all men from that same spirit which first moved Christ to come among us and become one with us, which spirit, not of imitation, but of original action, it was a main purpose of Christ's coming and death to quicken in us. All that Christ did was done to carry us back to those essential

principles of love and mercy which were in Him the motives to action. If we then have the spirit of Christ, the hungry, the naked, and the prisoner will not be to us so many Christs claiming our pity because of an interest reflected upon them, but they will be so many men claiming our sympathy by virtue of a common likeness to God, which Christ has lit up within us to feel and to see. What we call the pauper class and the criminal class are not Christs to the righteous, but the righteous are Christs to them. They do not rest satisfied with sending them tidings of a heaven where their miseries will be forgotten or their crimes forgiven, but they do as Christ did, coming to them and dying for them, thus taking up their cross and following Him. Having the heart and spirit of Christ, they naturally seek the same lost ones whom Christ sought. They work with Him, suffer with Him, exhort, protest, rebuke with Him, give their chief care with Him to those whom the world condemns and forsakes; and so far are they from a selfish or an ambitious motive,

so deep, absorbing, and unconscious is the impulse that animates them, that they are astonished at the estimate set upon their efforts at last. "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 37-40).

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

THE object of the writer of the Epistle to the Romans was to allay mutual jealousies between the Jews and the Gentiles of whom the Church at Rome was composed, to reconcile the Jews to the extension of the Gospel among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles to Jewish instrumental priority. That God is no respecter of persons, but that all men and all nations are perfectly equal in His sight, is the fundamental truth by which he seeks to accomplish his design, and the leading arguments that form the framework of the Epistle are constructed for the establishment of this proposition.* Those arguments,

* The three principal arguments employed in the Epistle to the Romans to prove the equality of Jews and Gentiles may

thus introduced for a subsidiary purpose, have been advanced to more or less prominent places in Christian theology. But it ought to be remembered that, while their essential truth sets them integrally beyond the reach of the modifying influence of any occasional application, their manner of statement may naturally be expected to be in accordance with the particular design they are intended to answer; and when we would transfer them to other purposes, or shape them into abstract and independent statements, we should commence by distinguishing their inherent and unchangeable force and direction from the accidental bent which a temporary use has given to their mode of expression. We might be prepared to find a doctrine which we

be thus briefly stated :—1. All men are actual sinners, inasmuch as they have violated law. Faith is the only remaining medium of justification. But faith is equally available to the Gentile as to the Jew. 2. All men are fallen and depraved in Adam. But Christ came to undo the work of Adam. Therefore, the remedy being co-extensive with the disease, the Gentile participates in the work of Christ equally with the Jew. 3. God chose the Jewish nation arbitrarily. Therefore he may now elect the Gentiles to equal privileges, if it be His will.

have known experimentally, as addressed to the life and conscience, present an altered outward appearance when employed in controversy with an unwilling opponent to indicate the ecclesiastical purposes of the Almighty. The first (with which alone we are at present concerned) of the arguments brought forward by St. Paul to prove that the Gospel was meant equally and unreservedly for all men, and that Jew has no advantage over Gentile, nor Gentile over Jew, is the doctrine of justification by faith or by grace. Now, it is a fact certainly not without its proper significance that this doctrine is not cited merely on authority or announced as a matter of revelation, but is itself the result of an elaborate inductive process. The Apostle, having first anticipated his ultimate conclusion that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, and having founded it on the principle that faith is the habit of the human mind through which God bestows His mercy, which principle he fortifies

with the Old Testament maxim that even the righteous man has the spring of life in his faith (Rom. i. 16, 17), proceeds to demonstrate his position—that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith—by the circumstances of human history. The anger of God is revealed against all men who, possessing the truth, do violence to it by their practical unrighteousness. But all men know the truth; for they have either a revealed law, as the Jews, or a natural law, as Jews and Gentiles alike. Therefore the anger of God is declared against all unrighteousness, wherever and in whomever it is found. No man can plead ignorance against the demands of righteousness. All men being thus responsible, it only remains to show that they have all transgressed in order to prove that they are all equally guilty. The Apostle first describes the state of the world at large, not the condition of the Gentiles only, but that of Gentiles and Jews, when tried by the requirements of natural religion, and shows that in this relation no man has any right to claim superiority over another.

All men, whatever other light they have received, are accountable to God for the observance of the laws of nature. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." But "when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." All have transgressed, and all are guilty; and therefore, the Apostle argues, any man, whoever he may be, or whatever additional relation he may stand in to God because of a further revelation given to him, who judges his brother, is inexcusable in so doing, because he who assumes the office of judge does himself the very things which he condemns. The Jew, however he might evade the law of Moses, was still amenable to the righteous judgment of God, who, according to the eternal

rule that is the basis of all religion, will render to every man according to his works. Having been thus convicted of violating the moral law of the natural conscience, and so far silenced in his attempts to assert a pre-eminence over the other nations of the world, he is next tested by his own peculiar code. He is told that he dishonours God by breaking that very law of which it was his custom to boast, as if the mere possession of it made him superior to others. He is reminded that the distinguishing rite of his people will be of no avail to him unless he keeps the law of Moses; and that if he fails to keep that law, the condition of the uncircumcised Gentile who does keep the law of his natural conscience is better than his. To this St. Paul, who knew the spirit of his countrymen, imagines an objection. They were not at all prepared to admit that the custody of the law of Moses left them, after all, on a level with the Gentile world in a common accountability for actual obedience, or that circumcision did not in some way exempt them from moral obligations. If fulfilment of

the law, they would say within themselves, be required equally from the Jew as from the Gentile, what advantage has the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision? The Apostle replies that the Jews had a great advantage in being the first people to whom God had committed His written laws, and in the opportunity thereby given to them of a higher obedience, and of being the instruments of communicating the knowledge of the true God to the other nations, and that their neglect of their opportunity and abuse of their office cannot nullify the original intention of God. The opportunity was theirs, though they had not availed themselves of it. The Jewish objector, whose design is still to maintain the superiority of his nation, urges that even if on equal terms with the Gentiles in transgression, yet his transgression was the necessary means of furthering God's plans, and that God therefore cannot bear anger against him,—that the disobedience of the chosen people cannot be treated in the same way as Gentile disobedience. The Apostle replies by a twofold argument: he

first appeals to the fundamental ever-regulating axiom of religion, that the last Judgment will be according to our works. If respect of persons on God's part, or any merely formal relation to God on man's part, could supersede holiness of life, God could not, in any true sense, judge the world; a judgment by works would be impossible. The second argument is, that if God's glory could be promoted by sin, we should be justified in doing evil deliberately that good might come, a conclusion which refutes itself. "What, then," the objector still proceeds to ask, "are we surpassed by the Gentiles?" "Not altogether," is the answer, "for we have before proved to the Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin." And then the Apostle superadds to the sentence of guilt already brought against the Jews as members of the human family, when tried by the light of natural religion, the expressly pronounced condemnation of their own national code. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." And, as whatever the law says it says to those who are under it, there can be no doubt

that this sentence of general unrighteousness has immediate reference to the Jewish people; and thus, by the formal decision of their own law, every claim of superiority is stopped, every voice of boasting is silenced, and the Jews are made to stand on equal terms of guiltiness with the Gentiles before the bar of God. From hence the Apostle infers that no man can be justified, or should seek to justify himself, by the deeds of the law of Moses. But it ought to be observed that this maxim is founded on historical experience only. It is not described as possessing any intrinsic fitness as between God and man. It could not be any dishonour to God if man were to succeed in keeping the whole law, and so justifying himself; for how could the perfection of the creature be a dishonour to the Creator? The Apostle deals with the simple fact that no man has been justified by his perfect obedience to the Mosaic law, and he thence concludes that no man will be so justified. But as soon as this conclusion has been inductively arrived at, it is confronted by a principle still more comprehensive, from which

the object of the Epistle is deductively made good. Man cannot be saved by the law of Moses,—therefore (it is not deemed necessary to state the middle proposition, that God will save man somehow) he must be saved by the alternative method, faith in an atonement. And as the sin and shortcoming are universal, affecting Jew and Gentile equally, it follows that the method which repairs the mischief must be universal also. Therefore, since God justifies all men, without exception or comparison, who believe in Jesus, all men are equal in His sight. Thus the doctrine of justification by faith affords in itself conclusive evidence that the Gospel was intended for all nations. Its immediate excellence over the doctrine of justification by the deeds of the law of Moses, in the present connection of the Apostle's thoughts, is that it puts an end to the exclusive pride of the Jews, fatal alike to their advance in true holiness and to the spread of truth. And as the whole drift of the argument has obviously been to bring out a conclusion that should do away with all unjust national pretensions, and

prove all men to be equal in the sight of God, so it is expressly declared that the reason why the doctrine of justification by faith has been thus formally inferred and stated is that it does this in an effectual manner. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the rule of faith. Therefore we argue that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." If salvation were through an external revealed law, it must be confined to the people to whom that law was given, and God might be said to be the God of that people only; but if it be through an internal faculty or a moral principle common to the human mind, it must be open to all men. If God manifested His will in a definite code, or in some peculiar customs and usages, or required a particular form of obedience, His favour would be limited to the nation that knew the code or the form. But if He appeals to the law of conscience, and addresses a habit or faculty whose special province it is to rise above the literal, the limited, and the formal, and to grasp the infinite, the spiritual, and the eternal, He must evidently

be speaking to the whole family of Adam. "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."

But the claimant of exclusive national privileges, driven from his successive positions, has yet one stronghold in which he hopes to defend himself against the assailant of his imaginary rights. Even though the knowledge of the law and the rite of circumcision may not confer an unconditional title to justification, and though the personal unrighteousness of the Jews be fully proved, yet, as the descendants of Abraham, they may still put forward a hereditary claim to the coveted advantage over the Gentiles. What, then, it is asked, was the experience of Abraham, our earthly father, whose children we are, and whose acquired privileges we inherit? For if he were justified by works the disputed superiority remains, and his nation has a lawful right to boast of the prerogatives it inalienably possesses. The answer is that, whatever may have been the good-

ness of Abraham's character, and however exact may have been his obedience, yet when standing in the presence of God with any other inhabitant of the earth, he had not the slightest right to boast over that other because of the terms on which he held his justification. The greatest of transgressors might yet obtain mercy, and it was simply on the grounds of mercy that Abraham was justified. Therefore the Jew cannot boast over his fellow-man, as if he stood in a nearer or more favoured relation with God. The boasting alluded to is not what is called the pride of self-righteousness, or a vaunting of one's independent justification, won by personal merit from the Almighty, but the jealous and insolent spirit of religious caste, indulged in by men who are represented as not even making any pretence to personal righteousness, but as resting their claims solely on the obedience of their forefather Abraham, and exhibiting itself in language of invidious comparison. The case is not supposed of the Jews boasting absolutely that their favour with Heaven was won by Abraham's works, but

of their boasting over the Gentiles because their favour with Heaven was so won. The former would be boasting over God, the latter is boasting over men. The Pharisee in the parable acknowledged his indebtedness to God for his superiority to other men at the very time that he boasted over the Publican. The proof that Abraham had no right of boasting over others to transmit to his descendants is contained in a quotation from the Old Testament:—"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This means that the terms of a strict covenant were not rigorously adhered to with regard to him. Allowances were made; his good intentions, his sincerity, his manifest desire and readiness to please God in all things, were taken into the account, and balanced against his actual infirmities and shortcomings, so that the sum of the approving judgment passed upon him included a pardon in it. According to severe justice, he did not come up to the mark of perfect obedience, and so he might have been condemned; but mercy intervened, and his motives

were taken into consideration. Counting faith for righteousness is equivalent to taking the will for the deed in the case of one who has honestly done his best, and failed only under the pressure of circumstances. When, therefore, it is said that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness, it is the same as saying that his reward, or his justification, was granted to him as a grace or favour. Now, to the person who works out his justification, or is justified by works, the reward is not reckoned as a grace, but as a debt, and this distinction of terms would be observed in describing it. But to him who does not work out his justification, and is not justified by works, but is justified by his faith, the reward is reckoned and fitly described, not as a debt, but as a grace, which is the same as saying that his faith is counted for righteousness. When it is said of a person that his faith was counted for righteousness, the assertion is conveyed that he was not justified by works, but by faith. But it is said of Abraham that his faith was counted for righteousness: therefore Abraham was not justi-

fied by works, but by faith. That the expressions "worketh" and "worketh not" mean respectively "is justified by works" and "is not justified by works" is obvious. The object of St. Paul is to prove that Abraham was not justified by works. He gains his end by showing that the language used in reference to Abraham in the Old Testament is inapplicable "to him that worketh," and is applicable only to "him that worketh not, but believeth." Because what was said of Abraham,—that "his faith was counted for righteousness,"—could not be appropriately said of "him that worketh," and is appropriately said of "him that worketh not, but believeth," it is concluded that Abraham was not justified by works, and that he was justified by faith. "Worketh," therefore, must be the logical equivalent of "is justified by works," and "worketh not, but believeth," of "is justified by faith." If this be not the meaning of those words, the doctrine of the passage will be that good works are not merely unnecessary, but that they are positively fatal to justification, that the man "that worketh"

cannot be justified unless his works be so perfect that he can claim his reward as a debt, and that the believer cannot be justified unless he wholly abstain from works.*

* The interpretation adopted by several modern commentators is wholly untenable. They translate *ἐργαζομένῳ*, "to him that works for hire." Even if it could be shown that the word has this meaning, it would still be necessary to show that *ἐργων*, in the sixth verse, means "works done for hire." An additional expressiveness is sometimes imparted to a word by the prevailing sentiment of the discourse in which it occurs, or by a mind fully possessed of the terms and direction of the argument; but here the idea of "hire" is not suggested either by the general subject or by the argument, but is at variance with both. This interpretation affords no conceivable relation between the two members of the fifth verse. There is no species of contrast or incompatibility between working for hire and believing in a God who justifies the ungodly, unless working for hire includes the notion of doing a perfect work, which of course it is not meant to do by those who propose this rendering. Working for a reward is the lowest form of Christianity, but it is not inconsistent with believing in a Saviour. But the great objection is that the idea thus introduced has no pertinence to the occasion,—that it interrupts the regular order of the Apostle's argument. The question is whether Abraham's justification, considered as a fact, was through faith or works. This question will not be in the least degree helped by settling what form of words are to be used in reference to one who works for hire. It will not advance the position of the Jewish opponent to prove that Abraham worked for hire; neither does it advance the Apostle's position to prove that he did not. The fifth and sixth verses are not a statement of doctrine or principle, but simply an argument

The sentiment of those verses is not an illustration drawn from secular habits, but belongs to the very heart and substance of the subject under treatment, "working" and "working not" having immediate reference to the question whether Abraham was justified by works. If we keep this question before us, as the Apostle kept it distinctly in view, and shaped every sentence so as to elucidate it, the whole argument will be easily understood. The point under consideration is not now whether a man is justified by law or by faith as two separate and incongruous principles, but concerning the justification of one who has both faith and works, whether he is justified through the medium of his faith or of his works. There is no real opposition or contrast, therefore, between working and believing in this passage of Scripture. The man who is described as working

founded on the proper use of language. It had been said of Abraham that his faith was counted to him for righteousness. This language, St. Paul argues, can be fitly used only of one justified by faith, and different language would be employed of one justified by works. Those verses should never be separated from the context.

must not be supposed as working without faith. On the contrary, his works would be the unmistakable token and unerring measure of his faith; and even if they were so perfect that his reward, in God's considerate verdict, were counted to him as a debt, and he would thus have ground for boasting over other men, yet this would be so far from leading him to exalt himself before God, or to arrogate merit to himself, that it would only prove him to be possessed of a faith so strong and so clear that, looking through the infinite expanse of righteousness, he must confess that, after the performance of all that came within his narrow sphere, he was but an unprofitable servant at the best. But such a case is only imagined by St. Paul in order to distinguish it by its proper phraseology from the language that describes the circumstances of Abraham. If the father of believers could not justify himself by his works, and so work that his reward would be counted as a debt, we conclude that none of his spiritual descendants can. The evil of such a possibility would be that it would give occasion to man to

glory over man, and to race to glory over race, and this is that outrage on humanity, and that temptation to measure ourselves from below rather than from above, to prevent which God has set the standard of earthly excellence so high that none may attain unto it. Again, the account of "him that worketh not, but believeth," does not describe belief as the antithesis to works, nor yet as the substitute for absent works, but as the remedy for actual and present, but imperfect, works. Man's actions are twofold—the internal purpose, and the external accomplishment of it. According to Scriptural teaching, the purpose, if not sufficiently strong, may exist without the accomplishment, but the accomplishment cannot exist without the purpose. Works, therefore, are the evidence and measure of faith. But they are not an exact measure, because in the nature of things works cannot rise to the level of faith, and the power of circumstances may keep them far below it. In consequence of this, faith is a truer criterion of character than works. But there cannot possibly be opposition between faith

and *its* works, as there may be between faith and law, or the deeds of the law. Works cannot keep pace with faith, and if the faith be weak, they may be altogether wanting, but faith and works never can, in fact or principle, be opposed to each other. Where there are works which are not the works of the law, there must be faith; and where there is strong, undoubting faith, there must be works. As the sentence does not run, "to him that worketh, but believeth not," as if faith could not coexist with works in the supposed case of a justified worker, so the words, "to him that worketh not, but believeth," do not imply that works cannot coexist with faith in the case of the justified believer. "Working not" means working short of perfection, in spite of one's strenuous efforts to reach the lofty heights of virtue which faith reveals to his gaze. To the man who has thus laboured, who has done much, who is the dupe of no low ambition, the slave of no debasing vice, the inward conception of impracticable righteousness, the survey of the illimitable plan, the ever-approximating yet never-

reaching aspiration of the soul, the power of beholding the sublime summits which tower higher as the step advances and the vision clears, is itself a consolation, and a fitness in the natural conscience for the reception of the justification which the mercy of God ratifies through the sufferings of Christ. We must not suppose, then, that the justified believer is one who "works not," or who intentionally falls short of perfection and is contented with his ungodliness, because he believes in a God who justifies the ungodly. Those expressions are the Apostle's historical description, and do not at all, in any connection of doctrine, refer to the conscious condition of the believer's mind. It is true that a man is justified who believes in a God who has made provision for sin and shortcoming, when he strives to be perfect and fails; but it is not true that a man is justified who does not work, because he believes in a God who justifies those who do not work, or who in any degree designedly substitutes reliance on God's mercy for obedience to God's laws. God can take the earnest effort, and treat

it as if it were success ; but man must not separate the atonement of Christ from the example of Christ in such a way as to make regard for the one compensate for neglect of the other. Faith is a complex feeling, having reference to the whole character and revelation of God. As God requires holiness, yet pardons sin, still making the pardon the incentive to increased exertion, so perfect faith aspires to a holy God, and when it fails, receives His mercy as an inducement to a more vivid aspiration. Since, therefore, justification through faith is an exercise of God's mercy, faith can never be regarded practically as a rival principle to works. The appropriateness of justification through faith to man's condition does not consist in its lowering the standard of excellence, for, in fact, it raises it and keeps it pure, fixing the thoughts on the first simple elements of right, and so guarding against the degeneracy of laws and secondary principles, but in the fact that faith, while aiming at perfection, comprehends within it a confession of the believer's weakness, and an appeal to some external strength by which

he is to be saved. This double character of faith may be easily understood by tracing out its deeper nature, and by recalling the obvious yet oft-forgotten Scriptural axiom, that Christianity is an addition to the law of conscience, and that the eternal and unchangeable moral law, as well as the specific remedy for its violation which the Gospel reveals, are both contemplated by the believer. Now, it is the nature of pure faith that it raises a man above and beyond himself. It is the instinctive reaching forth of the feeble to the mighty. It implies forgetfulness of self or mistrust of self, in dependence on something that can triumph and deliver. He who believes in truth or justice does not trust in the intensity of his own belief, nor hope anything from the vigour of his own endeavours, but flings himself on the omnipotence of the principle to which he is devoted, and only hopes, if ever he thinks of himself apart, to be borne onward by its irresistible progress, as the straw is borne by the advancing tide. So it also is when to faith in God is added faith in Christ as our Redeemer and example. A comprehensive

faith, therefore, as on the one hand it urges its possessor to a career of active Christian enterprise, so on the other it contains a principle of help and refuge for his inevitable insufficiency ; and in this its compound character, putting forth the whole energy of its nature, animating every faculty of the soul, embracing the entire circle of truths that are its proper objects, and, with all, as far as self is concerned, relying on the work of another for justification, it is counted and accepted as if it were unalloyed righteousness.

The Apostle next confirms the gratuitous character of justification by faith, or of the counting faith for righteousness, by another quotation from the Old Testament:—" Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without " his possessing works which could claim justification, " saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." From this passage, it is evident that the counting faith as righteousness, or the imputation of righteousness,

or justification by faith, is effected by the means of pardon. A believer's whole conduct consists of his faith and his works, his fallings short of perfect righteousness, and his sins or iniquities. If his sins or iniquities are forgiven and put out of the account, what remains is absolute righteousness in its degree. Not imputing sin is the same thing as imputing righteousness, but only in the case of one who has strong working faith, for if the faith were weak and inoperative, even though the sins might be forgiven, there would be no righteousness left to be imputed. The nature of the process shows that weak faith cannot be imputed for righteousness. The words of the Apostle make it unmistakable that the method of justification is carried out by the removal of one of the existing quantities, and not by the importation of a foreign element. The mere removal of sin leaves an actual righteousness behind it, and this actual righteousness, which could not be placed to the believer's account as long as the sin remained, so soon as the sin is forgiven, is imputed to him,—he gets credit for it, which is the

same as saying that his faith is counted to him for righteousness, or that he is justified by faith. His strong faith, regarded, through the divine mercy, without any admixture of evil (the evil being atoned for), is counted to him, not as perfect righteousness in the sense of attaining to the highest standard of requirement, for this would be a fictitious bringing of all believers to one common level, but as absolute, unmixed righteousness, so that he gets credit for just so much fruits as the truth of God could produce in his nature. Justified believers are equal in innocence, unequal in positive righteousness. The full and active character of the faith that thus obtains pardon is counted for righteousness and justifies, is not only inferable from the Apostle's argument, but is expressly and emphatically stated in the description of the faith of Abraham, "who against hope believed in hope. . . . And being not weak in faith, . . . he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to per-

form. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

Having thus proved that Abraham was justified by faith, and that, consequently, his descendants have no inherited right of boasting over the Gentile world, the Apostle, before he passes from the subject, clears away one remaining ground of possible dispute on which the jealous and litigious spirit of his countrymen might make a last stand. The very doctrine which he has been labouring to leave on record as the perpetual demonstration of the Divine impartiality must itself be guarded against being made an instrument of Jewish intolerance. Abraham had been brought into covenant with God, and in his case also had justification by faith been first formally declared. Might not the justification, then, be a portion of the covenant, and, if so, was it not limited to Abraham's descendants? This, the Apostle argues, will depend on the period at which Abraham is said to have been justified, according as it was before or after the making of the covenant. If his faith was imputed to him for righteousness only

after he was taken into covenant, and so placed under a law, justification by faith would be subordinated to the law, and would be a Jewish privilege. But in that case it would in reality cease to be a privilege, for, law being the governing principle, faith would be made void, and the promise be made of none effect, because the law, as proved in the history of the Jews, worketh wrath. If, on the other hand, Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised and brought under a law, faith would retain its original vigour and freedom, and would bring the blessedness of pardon upon all mankind. "How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision."* A promise was made to Abraham

* The triumph of Abraham's faith is ascribed in different parts of the New Testament to different acts and times in the history of the patriarch. In John viii. 56 we have the principle of his whole career, and the key to all else that is said about him. (Comp. Heb. xi. 13.) In Heb. xi. 8 the first recorded event of his life of faith is referred to (Gen. xi. 31., xii. 1). Rom. iv. 3 connects his justification with his belief in the promise contained in Gen. xv. 5, while Rom. iv. 22 ascribes it to the event spoken of in Gen. xvii. 5-17. Again, James (ii. 21) refers Abraham's justification to the offering up of Isaac (Gen. xxii. 3-16). The infer-

and to his seed that the whole world should inherit their blessing. This promise could not be fulfilled through the law, because the law would not only limit it to those under the law, but would vitiate it even in this case, because a man cannot be justified by the law. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all."

ence is, that faith was the continued habit of Abraham's mind, and that justification was the correspondingly continued condition or state attached to it. At any particular period of his lifetime it might be said that he was justified by the faith which he had at that particular period. His faith was an ever-increasing faith under trials (see Gen. xii. 1-7, xiii. 8-18, xiv. 22, xv. 1-18, xvii., xviii., xxii. 2-16), and was always evidenced by its works, so that he never could be said to be justified without works. It is not said that his first faith was imputed to him for righteousness. St. Paul, whose object, in reference to the time of Abraham's justification, was to prevent the Jews from claiming justification by faith as a part of the covenant, fixes on a period before his circumcision. St. James, who aims at enforcing the completion of faith, fixes on the point when Abraham's faith was made perfect by its last trial. Perseverance is a part of the fulness of faith, and is evidently not essential and inseparable from it, but a quality to be cherished and developed.

HOW CHRIST FULFILLED THE LAW.

RELIGION, like civilization, flourishes in the interval that lies between positive law and the unseen goal towards which the instinct of progress is continually striving. When legislation overtakes aspiration it kills it, and leaves for itself no longer an object of pursuit: the result on the individual is bondage; on the nation, immobility. When law is thus divorced from the living principle of right, its corruption has already begun. But, quite apart from the substitution of unjust or trifling laws for just and weighty ones, the erection of law itself as the sole principle and motive of conduct tends with fatal and inevitable certainty to the frustration of all vital obedience and all genuine virtue.

The inherent fault in law is that, though holy, just, and good, it cannot fulfil itself, and that it possesses no reparatory quality of making good its deficiencies. Its works are dead and inelastic, and can offer no satisfaction for the smallness of their performance by the largeness of their intention or the superiority of their motive. It was at all times a subject of anxiety with Jesus and His Apostles that this infirmity in the law, this inability to reach its end, should not be confounded with radical crookedness in its guidance, and that His and their efforts to supply a more vigorous principle of action should not be mistaken for a design of superseding the law altogether. The object was still to enable the law to accomplish what it had hitherto failed in accomplishing, by keeping its living spirit visibly in advance of it. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. v. 17, 18). "For

what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the law, but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 3, 4). "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. iii. 31). The two sets of declarations, those of Jesus and those of His Apostle, approach the subject on different sides, but aim at the same result. In the Jewish community a regard for the letter of the law had usurped the place of a love for deep, vital truth. They thus neglected a principle, and allowed a faculty, the faculty which must be exercised in order to grasp the principle, to remain in disuse. The principle which they neglected was that eternal, unchangeable justice, by its conformity with which all law must be tried, and which becomes a renovating power when it is livingly incorporated with the soul or resuscitated in it. The faculty which they allowed to remain in disuse

was faith, the organ or condition of the mind when it realizes the ideal. It is by observing this connection between the living spirit of law and faith, and the identity of effects that follow the awakening either of them into action, that we shall be able to perceive that the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is essentially the same as that of the Epistles of St. Paul. The spirit or principle of law contrasted with obedience to its letter in the argument of Jesus, corresponds with faith contrasted with the works of this same obedience in St. Paul's argument. The Jews regarded only the letter of the law, and, in consequence, their obedience, so far as it went, was formal and perfunctory, a mere shell of worthless works. The letter of the law and the works of the letter of the law were all they sought to attain. The remedy for this state of degeneracy may be either faith or the principle that underlies law, according as the faculty that apprehends or the thing apprehended is brought forward more prominently. Substituting the spirit or principle of law for obedience to the letter of the law comes

to the same thing as substituting faith for works. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, appeals from the letter of the law to its eternal universal spirit, which requires faith to discern it. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; . . . but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you; . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." That is, act on principle, and not by rule, and do right because it is right. St. Paul, in his Epistles, appeals from the works of the letter of the law to faith, whose proper

object is the spirit of the law. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. iii. 20-22). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. ii. 16). Jesus substitutes the spirit of the law, which is received and held by faith, for the letter of the law. St. Paul substitutes faith, which is the faculty that apprehends the spirit of the law, for the works of the letter of the law. Either the principle of law, which is love, mercy, and righteousness, or faith, which is the condition of the mind when it is turned from earthly things to the eternal principles of love, mercy, and righteous-

ness, will accomplish that which the law could not accomplish. Therefore Jesus says that He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; and St. Paul says that he does not make void the law through faith, but establishes it; the production of a more ample obedience, of a more perfect and practical righteousness, being equally, in either case, the result aimed at.

In order to impress and explain His assurance that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, Jesus declares that not the very slightest portion, even of the literal law, should pass away without its proper accomplishment. Now, it is evident that His design was not to fix the attention on the least important parts of the law, as if they were the chief objects of His care, but, by saying that not even the least should pass away, to show His value for the more solemn and important enactments. In the mode of teaching and interpretation which Jesus was commencing, the written commandment would be so firmly established, and so quickened with new life, that not the slightest tittle should be forgotten, much

less should the larger and weightier parts suffer. The fresh vitality which He was about to infuse would pervade the whole system to its minutest extremities. The letter of the law could not reach to or comprehend its spirit and secure its fulfilment; but the spirit of the law can and does comprehend the letter, and assigns to it its right force and value.* And this fixity and permanency of the law, Jesus proceeds to show, will be attained, not only by what might be called a vague appeal to general principles, but, moreover, by a strict obligation imposed on His disciples to maintain the whole law in its most comprehensive signification. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he is to be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same is to be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Here, again, the keeping of the least commandments is not the chief

* The spirit of the letter of law may be distinguished from the spirit of its principle. The spirit of the letter of the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," is, Thou shalt hate thine enemy. The spirit of its principle is, Thou shalt love all men.

thing that is impressed, but they are mentioned in order that, by assigning an inviolable sanctity even to them, the importance of the whole law may be more forcibly brought out. That the proper rendering is "one of the least of these commandments," and not "one of these least commandments," is seen by a comparison of New Testament usage (comp. Matt. xxv. 40), and is absolutely required to maintain the coherency of our Lord's language. It could not be said that whosoever broke a least commandment, and taught men so, would be least in the kingdom of heaven, because a teacher would not be considered least in proportion to the insignificance of the commandment which he neglected, but in proportion to its importance. "These commandments," therefore, evidently refers, not to "jot or tittle," but generally to the commandments of the law of which Jesus was speaking at the time. The meaning is, that whoever neglected the commandments, in even the least particular, should be considered as occupying an inferior position, as a teacher, to him who taught and did them,

both small and great. The fidelity of the disciples of Christ must be estimated by their attention to the whole law, in practice and precept. So far was it from His purpose to impair the obligations of the moral law, or to reduce its value, so inconsistent with the object of His mission was the lowering of it, as if it could be disposed and its requirements nullified in comparison with any other principle whatever, that He has left it emphatically recorded, in the address with which He opened His career as teacher, that those disciples of His who disregard it in their practice, and by their mode of teaching lessen its importance in the minds of their hearers, even in its slightest sanctions, will be considered by Him, and must be considered by all His true followers, as holding the lowest place, and as wandering farthest from true Christian doctrine, among all those who proclaim the kingdom of God; while, on the other hand, those Christian teachers who in their own conduct make the moral law in its loftiest aspirations their guide and companion, and who habitually exalt and enforce it in their public minis-

trations, will be by Christ, and ought to be by those who have imbibed His spirit, regarded as the most faithful and honoured of His followers. The two leading ideas contrasted are, neglecting the law by practice and precept, and enforcing it by practice and precept. The word "least" (as the words "jot and tittle") is introduced to give energy and emphasis to the expression, and must not be allowed to affect the main line of thought. Our Lord's statement is that those who violate and encourage others to violate the moral law are lowest and least worthy among Christian teachers, and that those who observe and inculcate the moral law are truest and best among Christian teachers. The inculcation of practical righteousness is to be the abiding test of Christian doctrine. Thus, instead of destroying the law, Jesus left it in the same high position which it had ever occupied, but filled it with a more vigorous and penetrative life than it had ever before possessed. He extolled it still farther by more rigorously binding its observance on His disciples, who were to be the rivals and successors of the

Scribes and Pharisees. "You must both do and teach," He says: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Scribes and Pharisees taught the law, not only in its more trifling forms, but also in its weightier matters; but in their practice they confined themselves to the former, and wholly disregarded the latter (Matt. xxiii. 3, 4). The righteousness in which the Christian teacher is to excel his Jewish predecessor is the practical righteousness of doing what he teaches, as well as teaching it. If he come not up to this standard, he is no genuine subject of the heavenly King for time or eternity. The relation which the spirit or principle of law—the inner vital righteousness which Christ reveals afresh and renews in the heart—bears to righteousness as embodied in codes and systems or in Gospel precepts, and the ground which the two occupy in the Christian scheme, may now be easily discerned. Jesus, instead of the law of ordinances or commandments, instils

the principle of love, which works no ill to his neighbour, and which, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law ; but He leaves the law of commandments still in force, both because the works of the law, when done in the spirit of the law, are no longer dead and unacceptable to God, and also in order that the fulfilment of the law of commandments may be a measure of the degree in which the law of love is written in the heart. Love is the principle by which faith works, and actions are the test of both.

FORGIVING, THE TEST OF BEING
FORGIVEN.

It is generally assumed that vengeance, or punitive justice, is the abiding principle that lies beneath the temporary expedient of mercy, that it is generous, even partially a duty, and that it serves to magnify a man to his own conscience, if he restrains his anger and withholds his right of punishment in the case of one who has offended against him, and thus gives him an opportunity of amendment and escape; but that to act in this way requires an effort and a strain beyond what strict justice insists on, and the exercise of an extraordinary virtue which cannot be expected to operate continually, and that, when the attempt has failed, nature falls readily into her established order, and vengeance claims her just due. But,

so far from this being the true state of the case, it is mercy that is the basis and order of nature and Christianity, and punishment is the instrument of mercy, and becomes at last the self-chosen lot only of those in whom it has not succeeded in working out its legitimate end, repentance. If any right-minded person were to analyse his feelings in reference to a trespass committed against him personally, he would find them to consist in sorrow that a wrong thing had been done, producing and transforming itself into a strong desire that it should be repented of and cease to be. The sorrow, or impatience, at wrong takes in practice the form of an effort to undo the wrong, not by destroying the offender, which is vengeance, but by destroying wrong in him, which is pardon. These are primary elements in the nature that God has given to us. We are grieved at the sight of evil, oppression, or wrongdoing of any kind. We are discomposed by it; it is at variance with us. It is a blot, a jar, a crookedness which our moral instinct tells us has no business to be, and against which, when it

comes under our notice, somewhat within us, notwithstanding all custom and all impunity to the contrary, arises in spontaneous protest. This grief takes various forms and degrees. In some feeble natures, that have not sufficient confidence in the absolute omnipotence of right, it sinks to despondency or despair. In others it erects itself to a noble indignation. But only when the injured person thinks too much about himself, and allows his personal feelings to interfere, does it assume the character of revenge. We are all, all in whom selfishness or fashion has not stifled the voice of nature, pained at beholding injustice. We feel that it is our duty to strive against it, and to aid in suppressing it and banishing it from the earth. This is the duty of all men, but in a greater degree it is the duty of him to whom the injury has been done. The evil is brought to his door. He cannot choose but be aware of it. His rational self-love is fairly interested. He must think of the offender more frequently than he otherwise would have done. He may be said to forget his ninety and nine friends who never

wronged him, and to seek after his enemy, that he may bring him to repentance. Jesus gives shape and direction to this unresting instinct. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." This lengthened course is the legitimate action of sorrow at sin. Punishment never enters into its plan. He against whom his brother has offended is pained and grieved at the trespass, not on the ground that it has been done to him, but that it has been done at all, and he wishes that the trespasser should be pained and grieved at it. He desires to communicate his own impressions to the trespasser, and thus to bring him to repentance, and if he succeeds in this he is satisfied; he has

gained his brother. He then formally forgives him ; but he had been really forgiving him from the beginning, because forgiveness is not a verbal sentence, but an actual process, whereby the sinned-against is endeavouring to bring the sinner to repentance, and so to make the forgiveness as received by him a valid and effectual thing, as it is in him who bestows it. It is quite clear to us that this process should never cease upon earth, when we remember that forgiveness seeks not to forget, but to blot out transgression, and that transgression is blotted out in the truest and fullest sense by the repentance of the transgressor. Sincere sorrow for sin, on the part of the sinner, is the essential cessation of it. Evil is so foreign and so unnatural a thing in the heart of man, as originally framed, and there is so little of individual responsibility for its introduction or location, because of the power of circumstances over human affairs, that full and perfect repentance would be, so far as the offender is individually concerned, that is with regard to the stain and pollution of sin, adequate reparation

before God. But, for the same reasons, in the degree in which men repented and liberated themselves individually from the penalties of sin, they would become responsible, as members of the race, by the obligations of positive righteousness, for the undertaking to produce repentance in others, and the closest practical bond by which the whole family of man could be united would be the noble purpose, increasing with the degree of realized emancipation, to emancipate from the thralldom of evil those who yet struggled or slumbered in its toils. Adequate repentance is, however, impossible. Our fallen nature is incapable of it; our spiritual vision is not clear, and keen, and single enough to see the wrongness of sin; our taste is not fine enough to apprehend its depravity; our sense of justice is too biassed and partial to bring home to ourselves the guilt of our personal implication. Therefore the inability to repent would of itself have ever remained a separation between God and us if God Himself in human form had not repented for us. When God was made man, He became responsible, by the fact

of His manhood, for the sins of the human race. Every true man feels himself chargeable for the dishonour or misfortune of his nation or family in the very proportion that he is free from blame himself. Though Christ repented in a more definite sense as man, and pardoned as God, yet in the perfect unity of His person repentance and pardon were the same thing, pardon being the instrumental form that repentance, or sorrow for the sins of others, assumed in working out their regeneration. The repentance of Christ for human sin that followed from His identification with the human family entered into the reconciliation which He wrought. His whole life, and, with a concentrated bitterness, His death, was a mourning over iniquity. Thus He was a man of sorrows. We all suffer pain at the sight of evil in proportion to our holiness. It is true of every follower of Jesus that, just in proportion as he has entered into the spirit of his Master, he enters also into the fellowship of His sufferings, and bears in his measure the burden of the world's transgressions in spiritual travail. The

man of mixed character and varied experience, who is hardened in the ways of the world, and knows only a conventional honesty and a conventional virtue, has no feeling towards the offender but one of angry, unpardoning severity. Sorrow forms no part of it. That is left for the comparatively pure and sinless, who, unsullied by the grossness of earth, and knowing virtue as an eternal verity shone upon by the approval of God, seek by gentleness and tender companionship to raise and restore the fallen. The purest are the true mourners.

And this affords a measure of the sufferings of Christ. Sin found no kindred element to break the harshness of its impact on His soul. Every nerve and fibre was bare to the ungenial blast of the wintry storms that beat upon Him. His absolute sinlessness made Him the victim. Evil preserves the equilibrium of the moral universe; the evil without is resisted and balanced by the evil within. But there was no resistance of this kind in the case of Jesus. The superincumbent mass of an atmosphere laden with crime and mad-

ness crushed upon His unsheltered spirit. Hence, when, in reply to His call to repentance, the fierce, fanatic, godless city rose against Him with fury, hatred, and reviling, His mysterious agonies, His sad amazement, His premature death. What Jesus experienced in the fullest sense, we all in our degree experience. The sight of wickedness causes us pain (only greater in degree, not different in kind, when it is against ourselves). We desire to bring the offender to repentance ; that is, we wish him to be an offender no longer. We repent, sorrow, and suffer for his sin in such a way as may lead him to repent and sorrow for it. That is forgiveness. To refuse to forgive is to wish the sin to remain. The unforgiving man desires that the sinner may continue a sinner because, his own heart being untouched by the mercy of God, he wishes rather to punish than to show mercy ; so he is not willing to regard the sinner in any other possible light than as a sinner. God is most forgiving because He most desires the removal of sin ; His hatred of sin is the measure of His mercifulness. Forgiveness, then, is the

removal of sin and the restoration of the sinner in the intention of him who forgives. And the instant we become aware of this we see that forgiveness is the most righteous and the most elemental thing in existence. Sin is the disease; forgiveness is the soundness and healthiness of eternal righteousness working it off. Forgiveness, therefore, is the rule, the law of the universe, the nature of God. It depends on nothing that has been done in time as its originating or efficient cause. It arises from no change in man's circumstances, or in the divine purpose. It is essentially, eternally, and immutably right. That God offers forgiveness to us is an additional inducement to us to forgive others, because it exemplifies the principle in a way that touches us most nearly; but if we had never heard of God's disposition towards us, if the Bible had never been written, or had never reached us, if the cross had been erected in another orb, nay (if we may imagine an altogether impossible case), if God had not forgiven us, still it would be our duty to forgive others, because it would be right in itself.

This is incidentally brought out in the parable of the unforgiving servant. The Lord of the servant was moved with compassion towards him, and loosed him, and forgave him his debt. There was no other motive or inducement to this than the rectitude of the act. When the forgiven servant cast his fellow-servant into prison, the other fellow-servants by the light of their natural consciences were grieved at the injustice and severity of the measure, and complained of it to their Lord. And the Lord said to the servant whom he had forgiven, "O thou wicked servant, shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" He did not say, "You should forgive because I forgave you," because being forgiven is no reason why we should forgive, unless we know the act to be right. Otherwise, if we had been refused forgiveness by one whom we had offended, we might plead it in justification of withholding forgiveness from those who might offend us. Besides, if we were to forgive in intentional return for being forgiven, it would be purchasing forgiveness

by forgiveness, and when we had paid or fancied we had paid the purchase-money, we might then think ourselves at liberty to take vengeance. This, in fact, was the spirit that animated Peter's words: If I forgive seven times, will not the debt be cancelled? Shall I not then be exempt from further obligation to forgive? "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" is a similar phrase to that in the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples,—“forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” We do not ask God to forgive us because we have forgiven, but, by God's own sanction and express direction, we remind Him of that everlasting instinct of righteousness which He has helped us to observe, and we pray to be treated according to it. This is the sense in which we are exhorted to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as He is perfect, which means, not that we are to be holy and perfect because God is so, but that we are to be holy and perfect after the same eternal standard of right, namely, His own nature, by which the Lord of the universe rules

His own conduct. "Be ye kind to one another," the Apostle writes to the Ephesians, "tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." When we rightly imitate any example whatever, even that of God Himself, we do not mechanically mimic the actions, but we magnify the principles or virtues that produce the actions, by teaching them to produce similar actions in ourselves.

Forgiveness, then, in the mind of God, being pain and sorrow at sin, with the desire to efface it and blot it out, it is evident that the repentance conditionally on which forgiveness is bestowed must contain in it the same element. He who repents will desire to make others repent who have offended against him ; that is, he will endeavour to alter and amend their sinful disposition ; and, since he is grieved at trespasses committed against him, not because of the personal injury, but because they are violations of the eternal law of right, in proportion to the largeness of his repentance and the renovation of his heart he will be pained and indignant at every kind and act of

wrong that deforms the earth, and he will feel bound by an uncontrollable energy to suffer for it in mental sorrow as matter of recorded history, and to resist it when it meets him in actual experience, although it may have no direct bearing on his own happiness. God's forgiveness, or His desire to blot out sin, and His method of doing it, transferring itself into the heart of the forgiven man in its full purpose and significance, renders him Godlike in his hatred of evil, and in his desire to deliver men from it. Short of this, forgiveness is only a name. There is no such thing as effectually conferring the grace of pardon, save in such a way as that he who is pardoned becomes a pardoner in the active, pregnant sense in which God pardons. It is because pardon in this full sense means repentance at sin, and aims at the total effacing of sin, that the bestowal of it is the comprehensive token of God's character, and of man's redemption. If we become one with Christ, it must not only be as the Son of God whereby we receive, but also as the Brother of men whereby we may give, and it is more blessed to give

than to receive. The bounty Christ bestows must be in us a fountain of bounty to others. Thus the readiness to forgive is the proof that we are forgiven.

The principle of the Atonement, the truth that lies deeper than the act, the Almighty reason of God which originated it, in the image of which our reason was made, must be renewed in men in the spirit of this its transcendent consummate work, must enter into their heart with the force and the light of this its inevitable practical development, before they can say that they have received the Atonement; and if they have received it they will be ready to die for others as Christ died for them, and to pardon others as Christ pardoned them. He who accepts the cross will bear it. That cross is not artificial, gratuitous suffering; it is not idle, sentimental sorrow; it is the acceptance of self-sacrifice as the principle by which wrong and injustice are overcome. Whoever will come after Me, said Christ, let him take up his cross and imitate Me. The cross of Christ is pardon to him who endures his own

cross in pardoning others. To take up one's own cross is to see human history as Christ saw it, not to be blind and deaf amidst sights and sounds of misery, nor yet to exhaust one's strength in hushing the murmurs of the suffering and healing the wounds of the bruised, for this is so far from bearing the perfect likeness of the cross of Christ that it may be done with the world's warmest applause ; it is to trace misery to its fountain of injustice, and to make war upon that, and to strive to bring it to repentance, with the world's malediction for the almost certain reward. It is to see the wrongs of life, and to endeavour, at whatever cost to our comfort and ease, by entreaties, by reasonings, or by the prophetic warnings of violated righteousness, to redress them. But our corrupt worldly nature disposes us to take all the good that God gives and to dispense none of it, to use Christ as a foreign and mechanical agent of our prosperity in this life and the next, to act as if He lived and taught and died in a formal legal way, which was to give us a title to the recompense of virtues which were

possessed and exercised by Him, but are in no degree necessarily to be acquired and exercised by us. This perverse inclination, which is most assuredly the meanest and basest stamp of the Fall, if it be not the very depth and distance of the Fall itself (for what was the substance and result of the corrupted nature as interpreted by God but a selfish ardour after the first transgression to put forth the hand and to seize and eat the fruit of the tree of life, and so to live for ever unrepenting and unrestored?), this selfishness, Christ exposes with the darker colouring which it takes under the Gospel dispensation, in the conduct of the unforgiving servant in the parable. He was offered forgiveness, its immunities were set in his power, but he would immediately have used his strength and freedom in merciless oppression of one who stood to him in the same relation that he stood to the Lord who had shown mercy to him. His own great peril and distress might have wrought compassion in him for his fellow-servant, even though his Lord had exacted his rights against him to the uttermost. But, in addition to

the obligations of sympathetic pain, there were laid upon him the obligations of sympathetic gladness. As the natural emotion of compassion which his own misery rendered him answerable for was not given to him for his own use and indulgence, but to be exerted for the common good, so the joy of deliverance and the exultation of freedom were not meant for himself alone. The man who has been rescued from a great woe is urged to consideration for those whose happiness is in any way dependent on him by the most powerful motives, the remembrance of past anguish contrasted with the delight of present security. But if he had brooded over his adversity as a mere personal grievance, and if he had failed to see in it only the result of that original germ of injustice which we are all bound to root out, not more because it floods the earth with wretchedness than because it is rebellion against essential right, it is probable that he will take his redemption when it comes as selfishly as he had taken his grief, and aggrandize himself at the expense of those who are in

any way subject to him. We know that something of this kind may occur under the dispensation of the kingdom of God, because Jesus describes it, and teaches us that pardon or deliverance is not a formal and final sentence, that it is not an absolute and arbitrary fiat of omnipotence fixing the pardoned as God's people for ever, irrespective of their moral condition, but that it is a mode of treatment, an application of a remedy, a patient, tender, long-suffering method employed by God towards man, and showing itself to be complete and successful when it produces in the delivered the spirit of the act of the great Deliverer. God's design is not to render us as happy as our present attainments and stage of character will allow, but to exalt our nature towards a higher range, and so to render us progressively capable of a more supreme happiness. He aims at altering our nature rather than our place or circumstances. The very conditions of this method and its successful prosecution, rendering us more sensitive to evil as it raises us nearer to the image of

Christ, will necessarily mark its progress in us by bringing out a keener indignation against active evil, and a truer sympathy with the evils of suffering. We shall often resolve the former into the latter if we judge as Christ judged, and look upon many of the sins that men commit as only forms of the injuries which they endure. The power to do this, to distinguish the blindness of the led from the blindness of the leaders, the sin of the fainting sheep from the sin of the faithless shepherd, a distinction on which the modifications and limitations of forgiveness rest, will be a proof that the forgiveness of Christ is shaping us into His likeness. He, therefore, who desires to know whether he is forgiven and at peace with God should seek for his assurance in the impress of God's mode of salvation fixed on his heart and conscience.

The life and death of Christ are God's pardon. It is not an offer or a call, but a moral method. He who has received the life and death of Christ—not any isolated consequence of them, or legal right or privilege procured by them, but the

will, purpose, and spirit of that life and that death, so that he re-enacts them towards his offending brother—has an infallible evidence that the appliances of pardon have not been administered to his soul in vain. We do not discharge our whole duty as Christians when we spread the tidings that Jesus has died for the sins of mankind. We do not exhaust the varied contrivances of forgiveness in reference to our fellow-servant by cheaply telling him that Christ has forgiven him. The proper counterpart to what God has done for us is not to tell others what He has done for us, but to do to others what He has done for us, as far as lies in our power. The forgiven servant may have been boasting of his Lord's goodness to him at the very moment when he was hardening his heart against the piteous cry of his suppliant debtor. The greatest mercy that God achieves for us—His truest, His only pardon—is the revival in us of His own nature by the Spirit of Christ, so that we to whom the word of God has come may be gods. If the word of God has come to us in power, we are gods towards all

human transgression. We are anxious to pardon it, and in order to pardon it we take up the cross against it, by whatever disguise it is hidden, by whatever authority it is sanctioned. Christ suffered for humanity as well as for men; He takes away the sin of the world as well as the sins of individuals. In its last result the work of Christ was meant to produce its effect on the souls of men singly, but unquestionably, as a means to this, and as ends in themselves, the elevation of the race, the detection of evil in laws and customs, and the gradual approximation of institutions in general to the theory of right, entered into the divine plan, and afford perhaps the most satisfactory testimonies of final victory, if they may not be considered the standing miracles of Christianity. But the heavenly statesmanship by which Christ would bring pardon to all men was in a still more express and unmistakable way directed to the rectification of the weights of the social balance. He reversed the established order and estimate by setting God among the obscure and despised mass of toiling poverty. Thus He

strove, and still strives, to make regenerated society the instrument of individual regeneration. The resistance of the Jewish people to any disturbance of the existing social and political condition was the immediate human cause of the death of Christ. It is impossible but that men who look beyond their personal salvation—that is, who desire to forgive in that large sense in which Christ forgave—should bestow some thought on law and government, and the influence of class on class, as a solemn Christian duty. Only let them remember this, that it was not the state of things, but the estimate of things, that Christ reversed. He would not have taken the possessions of the wealthy and bestowed them on the poor; but He exposed the paltriness of wealth, and declared that the spirit and character of the poor man are blessed. He would not have subverted the existing government, but he taught that kings and rulers hold their power on suffering, and that the severest measure of vengeance awaits those who, having undertaken the management of the vineyard, refuse to render the

fruits. The revolution that sooner or later overtakes tyranny and wrong is not the work of Christ's people ; it is the natural pit of ruin from which He and they seek to preserve the guilty to the last moment. The abomination of desolation was no less hateful to Christ because of the inevitable law that wherever the carcass is the eagles will be gathered. But, either in our individual or our social capacity, forgiveness is not a mere formal sentence pronounced, nor an indolent escape from thought and trouble. There must be self-denial and self-surrender in it. Christ surrendered heaven to accomplish it. The king in the parable gave up ten thousand talents. Revenge is said to be sweet : the display of authority and the exercise of power are gratifying to human nature. To take a part in asserting the sanctity of public morals and vindicating outraged law is an object of prized ambition to most men. We are all too prone to speak unkindly, and to deal harshly with those who are called offenders against society. We have taken to ourselves the gifts of Heaven, a higher culture of mind, a self-restraint

that is the necessary passport of the class to which we belong, a more refined range of enjoyments, the power of satisfying our reasonable desires without anxiousness or toil. These things we have received. They are to us the offer of pardon, the instrument of pardon to others. Yet we take our poorer fellow-servant, who owes us a hundred pence, by the throat, and cry, "Pay me that thou owest." We use our pardon as a means of oppression. We pay to God the tithing of mint and cummin; we demand from the poor judgment, mercy, and truth. There is pride in punishing; there is a haughty arrogance that is dear to man in crushing those who are against us, particularly if their sins are of a social kind, out of whose range and contagion we are placed by our lot in life. The eagerly-coveted happiness of earth (the true happiness is never consciously sought) is class happiness, the happiness of privilege, of contrast, of seeing multitudes beneath us poorer, weaker, more obnoxious to punishment and more liable to insult than ourselves. Cruelty is the ready growth of this soil, the

luxury of this enjoyment. All remedial measures that do violence to these dispositions are in the spirit of Christian forgiveness. When we forget or overlook the coarseness and turbulence of the poor, when we allow for their peculiar temptations, when we strive to remove or diminish those temptations, when we look on their crimes and sins with sorrow rather than anger, when we use kindness and preventives rather than terrorism, when we punish as a mode of bringing to repentance, as an instrument of pardon, not in order to disable and degrade,—we forgive as God forgives.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

THE parable of the marriage feast (Matt. xxii.) describes the condition of the whole Church, Jewish and Christian, the first part giving an account of the circumstances under which the Jews, who had been set apart and predestined to pass from their own into the Christian Church, showed themselves unwilling and unworthy to do so when the time came; the latter part relating the circumstances under which a member of the Christian Church, who had been intended to pass from thence into heaven, was found to be unfit at the last. The reason why the Jews refused to come to the marriage was that they were not worthy. The guest without the wedding garment, who was expelled because of this want,

means also an unworthy person, one lacking some quality which would fit him for, or entitle him to, being present at the feast. Now, it is most natural to suppose that the cause of the voluntary rejection or neglect of the invitation to the feast was also that of the compulsory extrusion from it, and that the unworthiness of the Christian was the same as the unworthiness of the Jew. But the unworthiness in the case of the Jews was that some of them made light of the invitation, and preferred their farms and merchandise to it, while others proceeded to acts of open violence, and slew the servants of the king. Worldliness and wickedness, at the very time that they deemed themselves the chosen people of God, were the specific offences that rendered the Jews unworthy of entering into Christ's kingdom. The exact parallel for this would be a professing Christian driven out of that kingdom because, while relying on his privileges, he was worldly and wicked in his life. We may conclude, therefore, that the Jews and the Christian, resembling each other in belonging to their respective Churches, in

trusting in those Churches, in imaginary privileges, and in misinterpreted promises of God, resembled each other also in separation from Christ because of inconsistency of life and fruitlessness in good works. . . .

Again, the series of parables in this connection commences with that of the two sons (xxi. 28), which referred to the characteristic fault of the chief priests and elders, professing and not doing. Then follows the parable of the husbandmen, who refuse to render the fruits of the vineyard, and from whom, in consequence, the vineyard is taken away, a description which the chief priests and Pharisees applied to themselves. The vineyard is the Jewish Church. Its whole temporal history, down to the destruction of Jerusalem, is described in the parable of the husbandmen. Jesus then delivers the parable of the marriage feast, which relates, first to the latter portion of the history of the Jewish Church, that portion of it in which the Messiah was announced and the kingdom of God proclaimed, and then proceeds with the history of the Christian

Church, down to the final Judgment. The first part of the parable of the marriage feast, therefore, refers to the same period and subject as the latter part of the parable of the husbandmen. The taking away the kingdom of God, or the withdrawal of the instrumental grace which would have made the Jewish nation the preachers of righteousness to the world, that closes the first parable with the cessation of the Jewish polity, synchronizes with the destruction of the murderers and the burning of their city, which separates the histories of the two Churches in the second parable. The taking away the kingdom of God and the burning of the city mark the same event, the burning of the city being the mode in which the kingdom of God was conclusively taken away. The second part of the parable of the feast, that which commences after the burning of the city, is the supplement or continuation, not only of the first part, but also of the parable of the husbandmen. We may, therefore, compare the wedding guest not only with those who refused to come to the banquet, but,

moreover, with those husbandmen who refused to render the fruits of the vineyard. The grounds on which the guest was cast out from the marriage chamber were the same as those that occasioned the destruction of the Jewish nation, either as described by the burning up of their city, or by taking from them the kingdom of God. But what were the offences that led to the taking away the kingdom of God from the Jews? Refusing to render the fruits of the vineyard in their season, a description which was directly applied by Jesus to the conduct of the chief priests and Pharisees, and was understood by them as referring to their case (xxi. 43-45). But the conduct of the chief priests and Pharisees had been just before represented by Jesus with equal directness of application and with greater clearness in the parable of the two sons, as saying and not doing, promising and not fulfilling. Their offence was a mingled worldly-mindedness and superstition, a prostitution of their spiritual commission to their temporal gain, and a settled belief that their safety was secured

for them by some method unconnected with obedience to the weightier matters of the law. The offence of the wedding guest who lacked the wedding garment must have been of the same kind. He was in the Church, went through the external conditions of membership, and professed to believe, but was deficient in good works.

Another comparison will make the point still more clear. The wedding garment is, of course, a figure or emblem of some moral or spiritual qualification. Now, the most unerring way of ascertaining what this qualification really is will be to find a passage in Scripture where the same truth is conveyed in literal and unfigurative terms. The occasion referred to in the casting out of the guest is the final Judgment. Not until then does the separation of the good and the evil take place. Then the angels shall gather out of Christ's kingdom all things that offend, and the wicked shall be severed from among the just. The principle according to which this separation will be made is given in emphatically clear detail in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. The Son

of man will separate mankind into two divisions, and set them one on His right hand and one on His left. Being cast out of the wedding chamber is the same as being set on the left-hand and driven away from the presence of Christ. The reason for the expulsion must be the same in either case. But the reason for the expulsion in the figurative description is not having the wedding garment, and the reason for the expulsion in the literal description is not having fed the hungry and clad the naked. The wedding garment must therefore mean deeds of mercy and charity.

The reasonableness of the case points to the same conclusion. The wedding garment must mean either the power of working or the work done. It must signify either the wisdom, the knowledge, the strength, the opportunity, or the use and development of them. But it does not seem so natural or so equitable to condemn for not having strength or opportunity as for not having employed them when possessed; nor would that end of the Judgment which is de-

scribed as the vindication of eternal justice in the eyes of the universe be satisfied if the sentence turned on the possession of an invisible quality which God alone can discern, as He alone can bestow it. The general teaching of Jesus lays the blame in every case on the neglect or refusal of the offered strength, never on the want or absence of it. Condemnation is pronounced, not on those who are wanting in the faculties of seeing and hearing, but on those who seeing see not, and hearing hear not. In the parable of the talents, which is another representation of the Judgment, those who have something to show which they gained over and above the gift bestowed on them, by the proper exercise of that gift, are rewarded. The servant who was able to produce only the original talent, and could not exhibit any proof that he had turned it to practical account, was rejected. He had the talent, just as the guest had a place in the Church, but neither of them could produce any evidence that he had used his privilege, and so fitted himself for the permanent possession of it. That which was

wanting in the servant was not the talent—the faith, favour, or power which God gives—but the work which he might have done with it. The wanting garment, therefore, was not the power or means of working, but the work itself.

Decision according to external conduct is not peculiar to the last Judgment, but is the universal rule of all judgment in this life. We cannot employ, or even conceive, any other mode of forming an opinion of character, equally certain. From childhood to old age there is no manifestation of the inner nature, save actions, whereby a man can safely judge even himself. When the good man falls we see it by his conduct, and when the bad man repents we know it in the same way. Every alteration, swerve, growth, or decline of character in individuals, communities, or races is indicated by actions, and only by actions. Jesus gives us this rule and restricts us to it. We must know men by their fruits. So indispensable is the integrity of this test, so disastrous would be the consequences if any confusion were thrown on the solitary infallibility of its guidance, that Jesus

rebuked as an unpardonable sin against holiness the cavilling that obstructed its application to God himself, when the Pharisees ascribed to Beelzebub an act of power whose intrinsic goodness marked it with certainty as an emanation from Jehovah. God is distinguishable by us from Satan only by His actions, and the sin against the Holy Spirit is confounding God with Satan by ascribing good actions to the latter. When St. Paul enlarges the sphere of love, and describes it less as an active quality than as a pervading characterizing essence, it is still by outward evidences that its presence is to be distinguished, not by its secretly warming the heart, or elevating the devotion, or strengthening the tie that binds the soul to its God. It is by his works that he proves the superiority of his own Apostleship. "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labours more abundant." And then he pours forth that triumphant demonstration of his claim which is relieved from the vanity of boastfulness by the substantial sober cogency of its proof. Even the Son of God appealed to

the sinlessness of His life as a testimony of His mission. If the wedding garment, therefore, did not mean practical personal holiness, we should be presented with an unaccountable exception to the ordinary method. But, moreover, the instance would stand in irreconcilable contrast with all the other descriptions of the last Judgment which occur in Scripture.

The conclusion to which the argument has hitherto led only brings it into harmony with what seems to be the fundamental law of Christianity as opposed to corrupt Judaism. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John v. 28, 29). God "will render to every man according to his deeds: . . . tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil; . . . but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good" (Rom. ii. 6-10). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things

done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10). "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. xx. 12). In fact, pronouncing sentence according to works is the very necessity and essential condition of a universal and impartial judgment. And accordingly the proclamation of a universal Judgment contained within it the death-knell of all dreams of divine favoritism and respect of persons. If the Jewish people only were admissible to the blessings of immortality, their claims might be tested by their descent from Abraham. In that case there would be no imaginable occasion for a general Judgment. And, on the other hand, the very notion of a general Judgment was fatal alike to the selfish intolerance of the Jews, and to every other religious belief which rests its hope of gaining the divine favour on anything whatever save personal righteousness, or some inner quality of which personal righteousness is the inseparable

mark. The trumpet-blast of the resurrection that summons the world to Judgment was the first note that awoke mankind from their false hopes and false fears to the conception of a just God who loves all His children alike. We have grown familiar with the thought until its solemnity has been wellnigh lost, or until perhaps the grandeur of the picture has grown less, as an external vision, by being absorbed into our habitual consciousness and our institutions; but when the period is considered at which Jesus taught it will appear that no mightier revelation can be conceived for the regeneration of the world, considered with reference to the false position in which man then stood to his brother man, than that which lay at the basis of His teaching. The Jews condemned all nations save their own to the blight of God's neglect and hatred. The Greeks, proud of their ancestral intellect, slighted in their wide indiscriminate scorn even the heavenly light which the men who made their glory would have hailed as more than the fulfilment of their fondest hopes. The Romans had sacrificed the rights and

self-respect of the universe to their brutal lust of conquest. In every state a few men towered apart, and the multitude were as the earth on which their masters trod, as the soil that travailed and produced for their enjoyment. When Jesus proclaimed that a day was coming when all men without exception, Jew, Greek, and Roman, high and low, rich and poor, king and subject, tyrant or owner and slave, priest and publican, must stand together on perfectly equal terms before God's judgment-seat, and be made answerable for the deeds done on earth, He strung a chord in the human soul whose distinct vibration had never before been heard amidst the voices of history. We have an additional explanation of the triumph of Christianity when we tear aside the veil of custom and gaze on this great doctrine in somewhat of its original splendour. Whatever light is struggling through the clouds that darken man's earthly destinies, whatever dawnings of justice are beginning to make themselves felt in the intercourse of communities, are reflected backwards from that dazzling throne on

which the impartial sentence on men and nations will be pronounced. Birth separates, not equalizes, men. Death is the leveller only when we stop short at the grave and view him as the annihilator. The doctrine of a final Judgment according to works lays the foundation of true equality between individuals and communities, on the principles of eternal justice. This may be allowed to be among the objects of its promulgation when it is remembered how much of the ill men do is done avowedly in the name of their nation or their class or sect. It was especially fitted to break down the fancied prerogative of the Jews; and accordingly we find it frequently brought forward in proof that the days of God's exclusive favour were passed away, that He is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him. What must the mind of the Jewish nation have been, when a truth so obvious to us was at length recognized with wonder by an Apostle, on whom a hundred lessons to the same effect had been lavished in vain! The announcement of a future

Judgment by works was the argument with which the Baptist supported his warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees that they must not rely on their descent from Abraham. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. . . . He that cometh after me is mightier than I, . . . whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii. 8-12). It is introduced by St. Paul as the first step in that line of proof by which he shows that faith, not law, has opened the world to the Gospel. "The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: . . . for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. ii. 5-11). The words with which Jesus closes the parable of the marriage feast, "For many are called, but few chosen," is only another form of the expression, "God is no respecter of persons," as it is manifestly suggested by the same topic. The Jews

believed that the "called" were "few" in comparison with the whole world, limiting the term in fact to their own people; and that the "chosen" were identical with the "called"—"many," that is, as the descendants of Abraham. They believed that few were called, and that *all* those few were chosen. But it is not so, as we may learn from the parable, and the doctrine it inculcates of a judgment by works. The called are many, all to whom the word of God in the course of the ages may come; and the chosen are no favoured community, no nation multiplied in numbers till it becomes as the sand on the sea-shore, but individuals, borne along by no rush of national salvation, taken singly from the side of their left companions and raised to acceptance with God because they served Him, and showed their trust in Him with the devotion of their actions. Thus the very idea of a judgment, when seen in the light of its original promulgation, necessitates the rendering of the marriage garment by deeds of righteousness.

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THE SUPERSTITION OF THE
PHARISEES.

THE separation of classes that, in an unusual degree, marked the Jewish people, lay far deeper than the division into religious sects, and exercised on the latter a much greater influence than it received from them. The social division was fundamental, and cleft the nation into two broadly-distinguished parties. The religious division belonged to only one of those parties, lay upon its surface, and was borne along and characterized by a mightier movement than its own. Religion was not a national inspiration, animating the whole body of the state with a common principle of life ; nor was it a personal requirement, dividing men into holy and unholy : it was a badge of

social distinction, a class hypocrisy, a profession by which the ruling section maintained their power, and a superstition by which they escaped its duties. The Pharisees derived their influence from the high religious character which they sedulously affected, and from their position as teachers. The Sadducees, who numbered in their body the wealthiest men in the state, were indifferent to the popular voice, and made no attempt to gain it to their side. The peculiar doctrines professed by each were not the result of honest research, but of the different foundations on which their respective pretensions rested. The Sadducees adopted a creed which was calculated to evade rather than provoke controversy, and left them to the undisturbed enjoyment of the pleasures that riches can purchase. The Pharisees, whose claims to consideration lay more in their authority over the people, and who were, in fact, a kind of religious demagogues, despising the very class whose suffrages they were most anxious to secure, were careful to make that zealous profession and to exhibit those austerities

which, whether genuine or assumed, have always weight with the mass of mankind. Though separated from each other by an artificial boundary of doctrine, both sections were in truth one class, bound together by the strongest affinities of taste and interest. Their differences are magnified in the light of our present knowledge. The belief in the immortality of the soul, which amongst us is the cardinal principle of Christian faith, and divides those who believe and those who disbelieve it by the widest conceivable dogmatic chasm from each other, might have been maintained or denied in the latter years of Jerusalem without any greater liability to the impeachment of orthodoxy in the one case than in the other. We find accordingly that those who said there was no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit, and those who confessed both, however they might contend when the point on which they differed was specially brought under notice, were always willing to hold office conjointly, and to make common cause against any danger that threatened their common privileges. It was be-

cause of this predominance of the political element that the Pharisees and Sadducees are spoken of in the New Testament under the same classification as the Herodians, who were a purely political body; while the Essenes, in whom the religious feeling obliterated the demarcations of caste, are never mentioned. On the same ground we can account for the seeming paradox that our Lord never addressed, save in condemnation, the earnest religionists of His day, and yet always spoke of the common people, who made no religious profession, in terms of gentleness and compassion. The former turned religion into an engine for justifying and consummating their class ascendancy. They were not hypocrites as we now use the term. They had all the sincerity that men feel who have identified their temporal interests with divine revelation, and who carry to the defence of their creed the watchful and jealous instincts of selfishness. Having once satisfied themselves that their own personal advancement was the design of Heaven, they could have little scruple in altering or interpreting the

law so as best to further that end. They believed themselves to be the chosen out of a chosen nation; and the sin in them which provoked the divine wrath of Jesus was the high-handed and one-sided legislation by which they sought to give effect to their self-election. A religion which, instead of softening and allaying, sharpened and sanctioned the bitterness of social hatred could meet with no tolerance from Him who came to teach that God is no respecter of persons. We might wonder how it was that a people so exclusive as the Jews could cherish internal jealousy, if we did not distinguish love of one's own country from hatred of all other countries, and if we did not know that those nations which are most jealous of foreigners are also most unjust and inhuman in their domestic customs. So much is this the fact that we might measure the degree of happiness and respect enjoyed by the commonalty in any state more certainly by the national bearing towards other countries or races than by the form of government. Only a people who hated all other peoples

could speak, through their ruling class, of their own populace as "accursed." Only in a region where humanity was degraded in its population of African descent could a portion of the dominant race be designated as "mean whites." National jealousy is merely that retrograde spirit which seeks to build contentment, not on solid self-approval, but on scorn and contempt of others, assuming the name of a public virtue. It was by intensifying the principle according to which the Jewish nation regarded themselves as the sole objects of God's favour that the Jewish rulers were able to imagine that that favour was sub-limited to their own body. And all that was needed to give force and permanency to this limitation was to bring about or to continue the same difference in respect to privileges between the Jewish rulers and the common people that already existed between the Jewish nation and the Gentiles. This the Pharisees had done and were still bent on doing. Enamoured of the distinction which their office as enlighteners and civilizers conferred upon them, they sought to

exaggerate it by leaving the people in ignorance. As their patriotism had degenerated into an intolerant class selfishness, so their knowledge derived its chief lustre from contrast with the darkness they had created around them, and they enjoyed the refinement of their order with a greater piquancy because it stood out in relief from the rugged background of the popular manners. Intellectually superior to the multitude by their possession of the artificial forms of divine wisdom, and holding their superiority by refusing to acknowledge the universal spirituality that is the life-throb of every revealed truth, they were inferior to them in moral perception and relative responsibility, as well as in the inherent injustice of their position. Thus their superiority roused the anger of Jesus, while the inferiority of the multitude only awakened His pity. He speaks of the Pharisees as hireling shepherds, shepherds who deserted their flocks, blind guides, teachers who had taken away the keys of knowledge, neither entering the kingdom of heaven themselves nor suffering others to enter, husbandmen

who refused to render the fruits of the vineyard ; while He describes the common people as sick men needing a physician, sheep having no shepherd, a cornfield rotting for want of reapers, blind men misled to their ruin by blind leaders.

It is very observable, however, that Jesus, while condemning in the strongest terms those who neglected or abused their office, holds up the office itself as deserving of the highest respect. For the men who turned the trust committed to them to their own profit no language of censure is sufficiently strong. Ye serpents, He says, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? The Baptist anticipated our Lord in his different treatment of the people and their rulers. The people he admitted gladly to his baptism. The publicans and harlots, and all those vessels made to dishonour which a corrupt community prepares for its lowest uses by killing the instinct of human dignity in the region where they exist, and rendering them insensible to infamy, he welcomed as if they were the very persons for whose sake alone his invitations had been issued. On them his

hopes rested ; their hearts would echo to his preaching. The only voice that speaks in the bosom of the common people with the authority and permanency of law is their native sense of right, and this is also the voice of God. Their vices and crimes are acts of rebellion against this law, conscious, and it may often be willing acts, but still fragmentary, unconnected, and resting on the basis of no rival jurisdiction. Though they do not obey the law of right, they acknowledge no other. It is wrong enthroned in power, fixed in statutes and customs, forged into weapons of resistance and attack, that Christ despairs of overcoming. It is not vice, or crime, or reckless despair that baffles pardon ; it is worldliness which has erected its own standards, enacted its own laws, proclaimed its own rewards and punishments, and set up an organized, triumphant system in opposition to faith. To the wealthy Pharisee or Sadducee who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and could have given reasons for his preference, or explained it away, self-sacrifice might well be described as an impossible

heroism. With the poor, self-sacrifice is in some way the unconscious order of their lives. Therefore it was that the common people heard Christ gladly, and that He said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of heaven before the rulers. The former had only sins to repent of, the latter had also rules and standards to unmake. The rulers had educated their moral sense into a perverted conscience, turned their entire allegiance towards rules of expediency and intermediate principles, social or national, and lost the ideal in what is called the practical. Conscience is only the reflection of external usage, whether right or wrong. But with the multitudes, their moral sense, their natural tendency to just dealing, though it had never been cultivated or brought into systematic activity, remained at least true to its direction. No corrupt casuistry had distorted its original rectitude. They were ignorant, but they were in a far healthier state than those who had made reason and revealed knowledge the instruments of lust of power. Their sinful habits and their open neglect of religion belonged to the

grade which they occupied, and their moral accountability was to be measured by the absence of all attempt at concealment or justification. The Baptist accordingly recognized in them, and appealed to, that simple element of justice which is the germ of all virtue. He that hath two coats, said he, let him impart to him that hath none. Exact no more than that which is appointed you, he said to the publicans: do violence to no man, to the soldiers. But he did not deem it possible that such fundamental, and yet obvious rules of duty could have any weight with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Their hearts could not be reached by arguments drawn from the principles of natural equity. He regarded their case as desperate. He broke into an impatient protest at their presuming to enrol themselves in the number of those for whom amendment was considered possible. "O generation of vipers," he exclaimed, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Who could suppose that they would receive the kingdom of God with an honest purpose? Men who had transgressed by pleading privilege against

the due discharge of the duties of their office might be expected to attempt to satisfy the demands of repentance by a similar evasion. "Bring forth therefore fruits," he said, "meet for repentance : and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Bringing forth fruits meet for repentance is opposed to saying within themselves that Abraham was their father, or trusting to that circumstance. The meanings of those two expressions must be different, and one cannot contain the other. The meaning of trusting to the fact that Abraham was their father cannot be that they trusted because Abraham was their father that therefore they would inherit the faith and holiness of Abraham, for then there would be no opposition between bringing forth fruits of repentance and trusting to their descent from Abraham ; but, on the contrary, the two expressions would practically mean the same thing. The meaning of the Pharisees and Sadducees saying within themselves that Abraham was their father must therefore

have been that they supposed, because they were the lineal descendants of Abraham, his children after the flesh, they must inherit the promises made to him by virtue of their natural descent, and without inheriting his faith and holiness. Saying within themselves that Abraham was their father was trusting in their mere natural descent from Abraham. Therefore, when the Baptist says that God can raise up children to Abraham from the stones of the Jordan, he means children in the natural sense only, without any reference to spiritual descent or resemblance to Abraham's character or inheritance of it. The truth which he means to impress is, that if God's intention had been to raise up a people to enjoy His favour and blessing, choosing them because of their race and lineage only, and without any regard to their moral qualities, He might in perfect consistency with such intention increase the chosen race by turning stones into men. If God's love is bestowed arbitrarily and unconditionally, no limits or exceptions whatever can be supposed to its action.

If men are saved by the will and power of God, without any co-operation of their own will and power, without any putting forth of their moral faculties, any acquired fitness, any exercise of righteousness, then there is no reason why God should not dispense with the needless machinery of human parentage, and its attendant influences of restraint and example and instruction, altogether, and, by an absolute act of omnipotence, convert stones into ready-made recipients of His bounty. Leave out the moral element, make deliverance mechanical, and the kingdom of heaven may be forthwith peopled to its remotest boundaries. Abraham, because of his faith and obedience, had been selected by God in order that he might transmit those virtues to his descendants (Gen. xviii. 18, 19). The chosen people were chosen, not to final acceptance, but to opportunities of moral enlightenment and emulation of their forefather's character. Their condition as children of Abraham was of no use or value, only so far as it furnished them with the occasion of following the faith of Abraham.

But the Jews, and especially the Pharisees and Sadducees, relied on their natural descent alone. They supposed that the eternal kingdom would be given to the descendants of Abraham after the flesh, though they might be sinners and unbelieving, and disobedient towards God.* Whether they imagined a divine decree which predestinated a certain race or section of men to salvation, or whether they devised a method by which the demands of a factitious justice would be met by imputing the faith of Abraham to his whole race, or a portion of them, is not quite clear. John's retort applies to either theory, and to any other theory which represents the enjoyment of divine love as dependent on any other ground whatever than working with God, personal righteousness, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, through such channels as infinite wisdom might appoint. If God's will were to be the sole agent, distinct from human will, and His omnipotence the only power exerted, men would be nothing more than

* Just. Mart. Trypho, cxi.

stones in His hands, an idea which the Baptist treats as the *ad absurdum* argument in all such suppositions.

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